PARENTIFICATION, DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE OF ADULTS FROM SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS

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01-275222-010

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Masters of Science (Clinical Psychology)

School of Professional Psychology

BAHRIA UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD

JULY 2024

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This thesis is dedicated to the endeavor of learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to Allah Almighty who has enlightened my path and provided me strength that was needed to complete this research. Without Allah Almighty's grace, kindness, and guidance I would not be able to complete this research.

I would like to express my esteemed gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Saima Kalsoom, Principal of Department of Professional Psychology at Bahria School of Professional Psychology, Bahria University Islamabad Campus, whose guidance, expertise and suggestions helped me in completing my research work. I am thankful for her sincere efforts for making this research possible.

I would also like to say thanks and express my heartiest appreciation to my beloved parents, friends and teachers for their moral support, affection and constant prayers during research work which enabled me to accomplish my research and bring this research to its finishing point.

Lastly, special thanks to all those who assisted me in data collection for this study.

Khadija Ahmad

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Full form
PQY	Parentification Questionnaire for Youth
ICCS	Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale
DoS-SF	Differentiation of Self – Short Form

List of Symbols

Symbols	Definitions
α	Cronbach's index of internal consistency
k	No. of items
f	Frequency
N	Total sample
M	Mean
S.D	Standard Deviation
%	Percentage
p	Significance Value
ΔR^2	R square change value
β	Standardized Beta
S.E	Standard Error
LL	Lower Limit
UL	Upper Limit
CI	Confidence Interval
DV	Dependent Variable

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Abstract

This study was carried out to examine the relationship between parentification, differentiation of self, and interpersonal communication competence of adults from single-parent households. A correlational study design was used to conduct the study. A sample of 306 adults, both men ($n=143$) and women ($n=163$), with an age range of 19-30 years were selected by using purposive convenient sampling. Parentification Questionnaire for Youth (Borchet, 2023), Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale (Rubin & Martin, 1994) and Differentiation of Self – Short Form (Skowron, 1998) was used to collect data from participants for this research. The results of Pearson product-moment correlation analysis showed Parentification (towards Parents) was positively significant with interpersonal communication competence, while parentification (towards siblings) was negatively significant with interpersonal communication competence of adults from single-parent households. Parentification (towards parents) was significant and negatively correlated with differentiation of self of adults from single-parent households. The results of mediation analysis showed interpersonal communication competence acted as a significant mediator in the relationship between parentification (towards parents and siblings) and differentiation of self. Group comparisons revealed that adults living in joint family system had higher parentification as compared to the individuals from nuclear family setups. It was also found that adults of fifth and first birth orders had higher parentification and lowest interpersonal communication competence as compared to the second, third, fourth and fifth birth orders. Similarly, adults with either none or more than 5 number of siblings had higher parentification as compared to the other numbers, while adults who had no siblings had highest level of differentiation of self. Moreover it was determined that adults living with their mothers had higher parentification towards parents and higher differentiation of self, on the other hand adults living with their fathers had higher parentification towards siblings and higher interpersonal communication competence. This study has implications for future research, the findings may contribute to the growing body of research literature in the field of psychology in the domain of parenting, adults, and interpersonal communication.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Family structures are built on social roles assigned to each individual (Haefner, 2014). Within this family system, the parent-child relationship exists primarily in a provider-dependent nature, whereas in some families these roles are distorted (Hooper, 2013). Parentification is the process of role reversal between the parent and child relationship in the family system, and has been identified to be an experience with both negative and positive outcomes for the parentified child (Borchet, 2020). In this setting, the child sacrifices their own needs in order to fulfill the emotional and instrumental needs of the parent (Chase, 1999). Parentification has been studied in the perspective of family system functioning, especially in the context of development and pathological parental functioning (Schier, 2014). Within this system, either directly or indirectly, the lack of presence of parental responsibility garners the environment wherein their children take up caretaking behaviors to maintain a state of balance or functioning for the family, especially for the parent (Hooper, 2019).

The duties performed by the parentified child go beyond keeping the family's homeostasis; these are customarily actions that give the parent the particular emotional and practical support that the parent most likely did not receive as a child (Hooper, 2019). Therefore, even though the parent is frequently emotionally unavailable for the child, the youngster must be emotionally available for the

parent. Recent studies suggest that this has been proven to have both detrimental and occasionally good repercussions (Hooper, 2019). This emotional kind of parentification describes how the child tries to keep the family dynamic positive while also attending to the emotional and social needs of other family members. Considering their well-being and being sensitive to the emotions of other family members might be signs of providing care for parents' or siblings' emotional needs (Borchet, 2020). A child experiencing emotional parentification may be placed in a variety of roles to preserve positive feelings within the family, such as a partner substitute in a situation where parents have separated (Borchet al., 2020), a scapegoat, parental therapist, confidant, or mediator for conflicting household members. This phenomenon is known in the literature as spousification (Hooper, 2011).

The other type, known as instrumental parentification, is concerned with providing for the family's material needs (Hooper et al., 2011). In these kinds of circumstances, children help the family out by helping to plan their daily schedules and accomplish this through their own physical labor (cleaning, cooking, doing laundry, shopping, watching their siblings, or working to earn money, for example) (Borchet et al., 2020).

Parentification during childhood can have detrimental, lifelong, and multigenerational repercussions that manifest throughout an individual's lifespan. Parentification can obstruct young adults' ability to develop in "normal" ways when it comes to forming relationships, developing their personalities, and going through other crucial developmental processes like growing to see themselves and

materialize their sense of self as individuals—a process known as differentiation of self (Hooper, 2019).

According to Drake (2011), Differentiation of Self (DoS) is a multifaceted construct that combines emotional maturity, the capacity for rational thought during emotional upheaval, and the capacity for maintaining intimate emotional relationships. The ability to strike a balance between one's (a) emotional and intellectual functioning and (b) intimacy and autonomy in relationships is known as differentiation of self. In his early writings, Bowlby made the important claim that understanding the intergenerational transmission of attachment relationships provides insight into the child's future relationships, which are heavily dependent on the mother-infant bond (secure base and bond) and shape the type of self-view that people form as adults (Hooper, 2007).

Theoretically, there are two levels to differentiation of self: on the intrapsychic level, it refers to the capacity to discriminate between thoughts and feelings and to decide whether to follow one's emotions or one's intellect (Titelman, 2014). Increased differentiation makes it possible to be flexible, adaptive, and more stress-tolerant. It also enables one to experience powerful affect and, when necessary, switch to calm, rational reasoning. More differentiated people are able to function at a similar level on both an emotional and rational level, all the while retaining some degree of autonomy in their close interactions. Poorly differentiated people, on the other hand, struggle to maintain composure when faced with the emotionality of others and are typically more emotionally reactive (Drake, 2011). They are stuck in an emotional world because their intellect and emotions are

linked, leading them to make decisions based only on what "feels right" (Jenkins, 2005).

Conversely, in terms of interpersonal relationships, it describes the capacity to feel both independence and closeness from others. Individuals with greater differentiation has the ability to adopt a "I" Position in interpersonal relationships, which involves upholding a distinct sense of self and carefully following own beliefs even in the face of external pressure to do differently (Titelman, 2014). Differentiation makes boundaries flexible enough to allow for both physical and emotional union with another person without fear of merger. Poorly differentiated people often engage in infusion or emotional cutoff when they feel overwhelmed by emotionality in their familial interactions (Jenkins, 2005).

Bowen's theory of boundary differentiation states that highly fused people are either dogmatic or compliant, have few deeply held convictions and beliefs, and prioritize acceptance and approval over all other objectives. They also stay emotionally "stuck" in the role they played in their families of origin (Titelman, 2014). Self-differentiation is primarily understood as a sign of the ability to control one's emotions and effectively manage interpersonal relationships (Sandage & Jankowski, 2010).

Interpersonal Communication Competence (ICC) encompasses six distinct approaches to interpersonal competence, namely fundamental, social, interpersonal, linguistic, communicative, and relational. It is defined as an individual's ability to manage interpersonal relationships in communication settings (Anders, 2000). According to Rubin and Martin (1994), the relational method

concentrates on the connection between appropriate and successful actions and the knowledge and empathy required to "achieve goals in a pro-social fashion."

Social contact necessitates acceptable behavior as well as the ability to judge what is suitable, how well an act matches the circumstances, and how successfully one communicates. Goal-oriented conduct is the foundation of this efficacy, and a communicative engagement is seen successful if it results in the accomplishment of a goal (Anders, 2000). Therefore, in order to function well and engage in social behavior, one must possess the following qualities: flexibility, adaptability, and perspective, control the level of interaction and uphold boundaries, ability to express one's emotions and thoughts, willingness to offer and provide support when needed, and skill (Anders, 2000).

Anders and Tucker (2000) conducted a studying this kind of psychological health outcomes of parentification in relation to interpersonal functioning in relationships. Specifically, they looked at the relationship between interpersonal communication competence and the particular attachment styles (secure, insecure, anxious, and avoidant) and found that people with more anxious attachment orientation reported smaller social support networks and lower levels of satisfaction with the support they received. The smaller support networks were explained by a global deficit in interpersonal communication competence. Deficits in interpersonal communication competence, namely a lack of assertiveness in social interactions, may account for some of the lower levels of support satisfaction. Therefore, even while people who are excessively attached are obsessed with relationships and have

a great need to be connected to others (Rubin & Martin, 1994), it seems that they lack the abilities to meet these needs.

Due in large part to their inherent lack of self-worth (Brennan & Morris, 1997) and rejection anxiety, more anxiously attached people likely felt unable to voice their own needs and desires in the context of interpersonal relationships. This lack of assertiveness also contributed to the reason why these people reported lower levels of support satisfaction. These demands will not be satisfied if they are not expressed, which will eventually lead to a lower level of support satisfaction (Anders & Tucker, 2000).

According to Licht and Chabot (2006), differentiation of self from the family of origin is a multidimensional construct that includes the ability to maintain meaningful intimate relationships while viewing oneself as an individual separate from the family of origin; a second dimension identified within this is the distinction between thoughts and emotions; individuals with relatively high levels of differentiation of self possess a strong sense of self and are able to remain objective in emotionally charged situations, allowing them to cope with them more effectively and being more resilient in the face of stress. This is similar to what would be the case for a highly differentiated individual living with the consequences of parentification (Drake, 2015). Therefore, the current research attempts to investigate this relationship dynamic in light of this viewpoint.

Literature Review

With relevance to above mentioned constructs, previous research i.e. discussed below has been carried out to explore these variables in a variety of ways. Parentification and the links between study variables has been studied in existing literature.

Goldner and Schorr (2023) studied the lived experiences of parentification, its long-term effects on the self, and coping strategies related to parentification through in-depth semi-structured interviews with nineteen Israeli women, ages 30-68, who believed they had experienced parentification during childhood and adolescence. Through the use of constructivist grounded theory, the participants portrayed their adolescence and childhood as a terrifying, threatening, invasive, and negligent experience that necessitated ongoing adaptation in order to manage the fear of breakdown and anxiety. Based on the psychoanalytic method and a developmental relational trauma model, the findings imply that the individuals created a split self-structure in order to deal with these negative events. According to the study's conclusion, parentification is a type of emotional abuse and neglect (Goldner & Schorr, 2023).

A study examined the impact of maternal parentification history domains (emotional and instrumental, care-giving role fairness) on the trajectories of mothers' evaluative cognition (about self-esteem, parenting self-efficacy, and about child: difficult child temperament, dissatisfaction with child contributions to relationships) in early parenthood, investigated through a longitudinal design involving first-time mothers. The results established and supported associations

between the role unfairness domain of parentification and each domain of maternal evaluative cognitions, as well as a significant indirect effect of unfairness on risk to maternal evaluative cognitions about child contributions through parenting self-efficacy. A spillover model was also examined, in which evaluative cognitions about the self were examined as potential mediators between parentification history and evaluative cognitions about children (Nuttall, 2021).

According to Borchet et al. (2018), parentification impedes emerging adults' ability to complete developmental tasks because of their early experiences. This can result in distortions in the process of separation and individuation, difficulties being a parent and spouse, a student, an employee, and an overall impact on an individual's ability to adapt functionally as an adult (Borchet, 2018).

Lee and Cho (2018) investigated the effects of parentification dimensions, length, age of onset, and familial conditions on depressive symptoms in college students from South Korea. Only perceived unfairness was linked to depressive symptoms after controlling for age of onset, duration, and other parentification dimensions. The results of self-rated testing revealed that there were few significant differences between depressive symptoms and parentification dimensions regarding family circumstances that contributed to parentification. The conclusion was that longer duration and earlier onset of parentification were significantly associated with higher depressive symptom scores in adulthood (Lee & Cho, 2018).

In a study by Qayyum et al., (2021), parentification was examined using a self-analysis framework, and its advantages and disadvantages were spoken about. Talks with the doctor, diary entries, and audio recordings are some of the techniques

used to collect data. The paralinguistic aspects of the researcher's conversation with the research subject were the main focus of the data analysis. The unique characteristics of parentified speech are demonstrated by the research findings. It also implied that the prospective parentified figure may make parentification a fulfilling experience by preparing ahead of time and being mentally prepared (Qayyum, 2021).

Parentification and Differentiation of Self

A study was conducted to study the level of parentification between multicultural and monocultural families where externalized shame and the structural relationship between self-differentiation and internalized problems was the focus of the research. From a sample of children from multicultural and monocultural families, results concluded that cultural differences need to be considered when managing children's parentification in counseling and increasing the level of their self-differentiation resulted in an increase in solving internalized problems (Kim & Lee, 2019).

Parentification and mental health symptoms were examined in a study involving college students. Perceived unfairness and differentiation of self (DoS) were found to be mediators between parentification and mental health symptoms. Significant effects were observed for DoS as a mediator between parentification and mental health symptoms, with perceived unfairness also demonstrating a mediating effect (Jankowski, 2011).

To address the possible outcome direction, a study was carried out examining the relationship between instrumental parentification, emotional parentification, adult secure attachment style, resiliency, and differentiation of self with outcome variables of posttraumatic growth and distress in young adults attending college in America. The unique effect on posttraumatic growth and emotional parentification was only partially explained by resiliency and self-differentiation, accounting for 25% of the unique effect on distress among the predictor factors, according to the results. It was advised to investigate instrumental and emotional parentification independently for a thorough understanding of each because the remaining studies had conflicting conclusions (Hooper, 2003).

Parentification and Interpersonal Communication Competence

To measure the level of parentification effect on parents' communication competence, in-depth interviews with parents from the Infant and Toddler Psychiatry Unit Intervention Programme were conducted as part of a study on the effects of growing up with substance-abusing parents and how this influences the experience of becoming a parent. The content analysis's findings demonstrated that they had high levels of stress, inadequacy, and incompetence and that, as adults, they now need professional assistance to manage parenthood on their own (Tedgård, 2019).

Differentiation of Self and Interpersonal Communication Competence

The subsequent research investigated the correlation between self-differentiation and interpersonal competence in the relationships of teenage defectors from North Korea, with social support serving as a mediating factor.

Students in the sample ranged in age from 9 to 24. The findings showed that these teenagers' degree of self-differentiation positively impacted their interpersonal competence in relationships, and social support positively impacted this competence as well (Chae, 2020).

In order to investigate the dependence of attachment bonding with parents or from differentiation of self processes, the following study concentrated on the relationship between adult attachments that result in interpersonal competence and the construct of differentiation of self according to the Attachment theory and Family Systems theory. The findings showed that emotional reactivity and poor levels of paternal care are the variables that predict anxiety, inadequate interpersonal skills, and avoidance in adults (Lampis, 2019).

A research study that examined the degree of interpersonal communication ability, self-differentiation, and college life adjustment was conducted with Korean nursing students. Interpersonal communication competence and self-differentiation were found to be significant factors in the research results that influence the adjustment to college life. These factors also increased the level of adjustment with higher levels, making them necessary for college adjustment (Lim, 2018).

In another study, participants in a romantic relationship provided data for a study looking at the relationship outcomes between levels of self-differentiation and the potential for communication skill as a mediator. The findings showed a substantial correlation between communication and self-differentiation in respect to relationship outcomes. These findings imply that more overt communication

behaviors may be a beneficial way to access distinction, and that having desired relationship outcomes may be associated to these actions (Wilson, 2016).

In another research study, male and female University of Tehran students were approached to study the relationship between differentiation of self and its impact on characteristics of identity such as interpersonal competency and communication. Findings indicated a negative correlation between the two variables, which implied that a decline in self-differentiation also affected identity-related characteristics like interpersonal competence (Mehri, 2011). As of current the author is unable to source more literature for parentification, differentiation of self and interpersonal communication competence studied together, due to the scarcity of research studies on the variables of interest.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical basis for this study is established on the grounds of two theories coinciding with the literature; family systems theory and attachment theory.

Family Systems Theory

Family systems theorists Minuchin and Bowen (1989) highlight the importance of the function of neglect and cultural context. Because the family system is dynamic, the particular setting in which neglect is seen must be contextualized in order for it to be sufficiently investigated. According to Skowron (2011), certain family systems can lead to an unwarranted overlap in subsystems, wherein members assume roles that are customarily assigned to other members. This can result in parents playing childlike roles and children playing parental roles, a phenomenon that encourages parentification (Hooper, 2020).

Boundaries are frequently perceived in these households as being twisted, inflexible, or nonexistent. This family was described by Minuchin as an "enmeshed family," which is a family in which one member excessively interacts with or even takes advantage of other members of the system at different levels of hierarchy. Researchers and clinicians can learn more about the factors that contribute to child abuse by using family systems theory. For instance, a number of factors, including parental psychopathology, alcohol and substance misuse and dependence, marital distress, mental health issues, and psychiatric illness, may play a role in the maltreatment of children (Chase, 1999). These occurrences in turn have a significant impact on attachment by making it difficult for parents to provide their

children the proper loving, bonding, and care (Drake, 2013). As so, the parent is unable to give the child a stable foundation (Bowlby, 1988). Chaos and disarray within the family can also be indirectly caused by parents who behave subpar (Marotta, 2003). The parent may have limited resources accessible to them or may look for assistance outside of the family structure.

According to the child's perspective, a number of factors, including prior psychopathology, a history of emotional deprivation, the child's developmental stage at the time of the neglect, IQ, and self-esteem, inhibit the reciprocal behavior necessary to form attachments, which in turn leads to poor attachment (Gold, 2001). Furthermore, the perception of abuse, including parentification, is probably influenced by individual-level characteristics as well, such as physiology, psychology, internal working models, and temperament. In order to develop the most effective theoretical model to investigate attachment and relational processes related to the behavior of the individual and family members transacted in the home context where parentification is evident, family systems theory integrates with attachment theory (Hooper, 2013).

Attachment Theory

According to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1958; Ainsworth, 1970), parentification can co-occur with both high and low self-functioning, and it can have different consequences as an adult. Put another way, attachment theory might provide some insight into why people who experienced parentification as children might not make the same mistakes with their offspring and instead exhibit excellent

functioning as adults. Moreover, parentification research throughout the lifespan is made easier by this developmental cognitive paradigm (Byng-Hall, 2002). Parentified youngsters may develop distorted relationships and perform poorly both inside and outside the family as a result of trying to raise themselves while also providing care for their parents and siblings (Chase, 1999). This could establish a trend in maturity that could aid in the parentification that is passed down across generations. By taking into account the adult's meaning building (i.e., creation of internal working models) in relation to the parentification process, significant connections may become apparent (Byng-Hall, 2002).

According to published research, those who are labeled as insecurely attached and who get inadequate parenting are not destined to always engage in this way. Put another way, given the correct circumstances, researchers have openly acknowledged the possibility of a "earned secure" attachment pattern later in development (Pearson et al., 1994). The attachment style that a person acquired as a child has a substantial impact on how resilient they are to stressful life situations. Liotti (1999), the environment and the parent (an attachment figure) act as a barrier to the secure foundation and the attachment process, and attachment categories are generally stable over time. This inhibition foreshadows a child's internal working paradigm, which is that people are unreliable or unfit to react, console, and support them in difficult situations. Furthermore, the internal working model of severe abuse can take on the form of "I am not worthy of comfort and support" (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994).

All in all, attachment theory, as a lifelong viewpoint, guides an individual's handling of experiences from the past that are relevant to the present in all adult interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships (Hooper, 2013) with parents and siblings. The conceptual framework connecting the variables of interest is presented by this conceptualization of this study variables.

Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework of the present study is presented below.

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │  Interpersonal  │
                    │  Communication  │
              -     │   Competence    │      +
                  ↗ └─────────────────┘ ↘
   ┌──────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
   │  Parentification │ ───────────→ │ Differentiation of Self│
   └──────────────────┘      -       └──────────────────────┘
                                              ↑
                                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                                    │     Covariates:     │
                                    │  Family structure,  │
                                    │   Marital Status,   │
                                    │ Education, Family and│
                                    │  Personal income,   │
                                    │ Number of Siblings, │
                                    │ Birth Order, Parent │
                                    │   residing with,    │
                                    │ Employment status of │
                                    │       parent        │
                                    └─────────────────────┘
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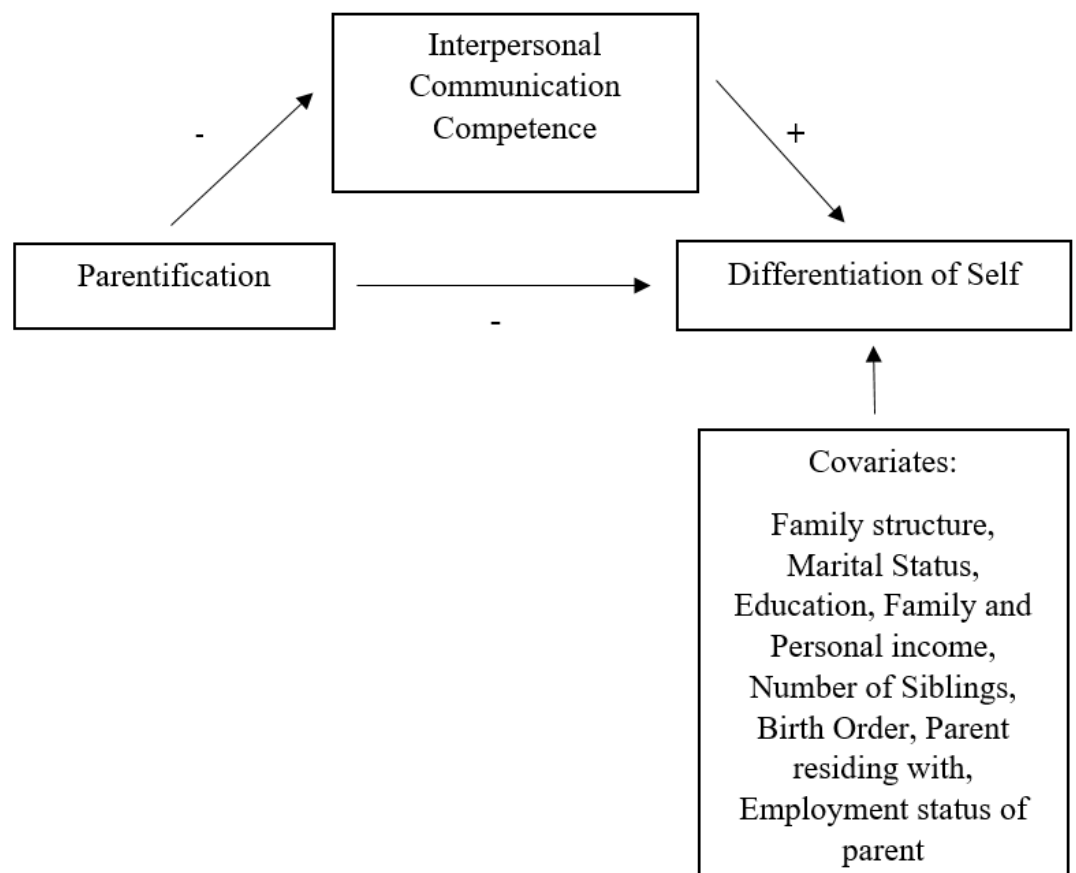
Figure 1 Mediation effect of interpersonal communication competence on relationship of parentification and differentiation of self, with covariates.

The above conceptual model reflects the nature of the relationship between the variables of interest; parentification, differentiation of self and interpersonal communication competence. The relationship is shown to be negative between parentification and differentiation of self, indicating that an increase in parentification might lead to a decrease in the differentiation of self for an individual. Whereas the relationship between parentification and the mediating variable, interpersonal communication competence is also seen to be negative, and then seen as positive when studied with differentiation of self. This leads to the understanding that an increase in parentification leads to a decrease in the interpersonal communication competence of an individual, however its decrease also decreases the differentiation of self of that individual. This conceptual model is further studied within the research study.

Rationale of the study

Parentification is a well-known concept in the field of family therapy and literature details the various covariates this phenomenon has been studied with. Understanding the relationship of parentification with differentiation of self and interpersonal communication competence will lead to an understanding of the implication of interpersonal communication competence of adults from single-parent households. The association between these variables have not been demonstrated in a single proposed model. The framework of this study is aimed to understand the mediating role of interpersonal communication competence in the relationship between parentification and differentiation of self of adults from single-parent households.

The study variables have not been researched in Pakistan, this well-known phenomenon is yet to be explored with an indigenous sample. In context of the current study, Borchet (2023) suggested extending research to participants with different racial and ethnic identities, income or socioeconomic status could add valuable insight into generalizability of the findings. It becomes essential that indigenous research on the matter is conducted. This current study aims to target this gap in research.

There is limited knowledge and/or research on a diverse sample, the study variables have been investigated more in college and university students, and other samples have not been entertained to a large degree. Many existing studies have emphasized that further research is needed where different population samples are used, other than college and university students (Hooper, 2013; Titelman, 2014;

Drake, 2015; Borchet, 2023). The current study aims to address this research gap and to focus on exploring the aforementioned relationship in adults from single-parent households with various demographic differences, thus catering to a larger age group, a different sample.

Thus, the current research will provide valuable insights about the relationship between parentification, differentiation of self and interpersonal communication competence of adults from single-parent households. The extent to which parentification is serving or hindering the level of differentiation of self of adults could be useful. Testing the theory of family systems through these variables along with other correlates i.e. the study variables is significant because of its decades-long influx into research, society, and even possible mental health guidelines for social and family therapy context from South-Asian perspective.

<div align="right">**Chapter 2**</div>

<div align="center">**Method**</div>

Research Design

A correlational strategy employing cross-sectional method was used in this research to study correlation between parentification, interpersonal communication competence and differentiation of self of adults from single-parent households.

Objectives

1. To identify the relationship between parentification, interpersonal communication competence, and differentiation of self of adults from single-parent households.

2. To study the role of demographic characteristics (gender, age, marital status, level of education, family and personal income, birth order, number of siblings, parent parentified by) across to parentification, interpersonal communication competence, and differentiation of self of adults from single-parent households.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a negative relationship between parentification towards parents and interpersonal communication competence of adults from single-parent households.

2. There will be a negative relationship between parentification towards siblings and interpersonal communication competence of adults from single-parent households.

3. There will be a positive relationship between interpersonal communication competence and differentiation of self of adults from single-parent households.

4. Interpersonal communication competence will mediate the relationship between parentification and differentiation of self of adults from single-parent households.

5. First born adults from single-parent households will have higher parentification as compared to other birth orders.

6. Adults with more number of siblings will have parentification towards siblings as compared to adults with less or no siblings.

7. Adults residing with fathers will have lower differentiation of self as compared to adults residing with mothers.

8. Adults with higher personal income will have higher interpersonal communication competence than adults with lower or no personal income.

9. Adults with higher education levels will have higher interpersonal communication competence than adults with lower education level status.

10. Adults from nuclear family setups will have higher differentiation of self than adults living in joint family settings.

Sample

The sample consists of adults ($N=306$) working men ($N=143$) and working women ($N=163$), from single-parent households located in in Islamabad and Rawalpindi between the ages of 19 to 30 years. Participants were required to have the ability to understand and write in English language and be willing to participate in the research. Purposive convenient sampling technique was used in this research.

Inclusion criteria: Individuals having formal education above intermediate level, in any kind of romantic relationship, financially self-supporting or dependent, living within any family system, of any birth order and is an only child/has siblings.

Exclusion criteria: Children of a second marriage.

Operational Definitions

Parentification

According to Borchet (2023), parentification is defined as the process of reversing roles between a child and their parent in which the child begins to assume adult-like responsibilities and roles regardless of their age or ability. This can be applied to either parent or sibling. Parentification is measured using a self-report tool that is operationally defined by the sum of the scores on each subscale of the Parentification Questionnaire for Youth, which has subscales for parentification toward parents and parentification toward siblings. Higher scores on each subscale indicate a higher level of parentification.

Differentiation of Self

Differentiation of Self is the degree to which one is able to balance (a) emotional and intellectual functioning and (b) intimacy and autonomy in relationships on an intrapsychic level, with the ability to distinguish thoughts from feelings and to choose between being guided by one's intellect or one's emotions, or on the interpersonal level, referring to the ability to experience intimacy with and independence from others (Skowron, 2003)

Interpersonal Communication Competence

Interpersonal Communication Competence (ICC) is an impression or judgment formed about a person's ability to manage interpersonal relationships in communication settings, with six different approaches to interpersonal competence: fundamental, social, interpersonal, linguistic, communicative, and relational (Drake, 2013)

Measures

Following are the instruments utilized in the research study:

Informed Consent Form

An informed consent form which includes orientation of the research study and basic ethical guidelines and instructions for the participants, taking their signed consent to proceed with the questionnaires further (see appendix D).

Demographic Sheet

The demographic sheet included demographic variables of the respondents, such as gender, age, marital status, educational level, monthly family income, personal income, family system, birth order, number and gender of siblings, status of parent absent, parent currently residing with and employment status of parent residing with. (see appendix D).

Parentification Questionnaire for Youth

The Parentification Questionnaire for Youth (PQY) is a total 26 item scale measuring the degree of parentification in young adults (Borchet et al., 2020) with 2 additional subscales. The original scale was constructed in the Polish language, and then an English translation were made by Borchet (2020). The scale marks responses of how true the sentence is on a Likert scale from 1 (never true), 2 (rarely true), 3 (sometimes true), 4 (often true) and 5 (always true). Basic Subscales include Instrumental parentification toward parents (items 3, 4, 6, 11) with CR (Cumulative Reliability)= 0.7, Emotional parentification toward parents (items 1, 7, 9, 10) with CR (composite reliability) = 0.7, Satisfaction with the role (played in the family system) (items 2, 5, 8, 13) with CR= 0.8 and Sense of injustice (items 12, 14, 15, 16, 17) with CR= 0.8. The Additional Subscales are Instrumental parentification toward siblings (items 2, 3, 4, 7) with CR= 0.7 and Emotional parentification toward siblings (items 1, 5, 6, 8, 9) with CR= 0.8 (Borchet, 2023).

Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale

The Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale was designed by Rubin and Martin (1994) comprising of 30 items, distributed across 10 subscales. The scale marks responses of what best reflects the communication with others on a Likert scale from 1 (almost never), 2 (seldom), 3 (sometimes), 4 (often), and 5 (almost always). The subscales of Self-Disclosure (items 1, 2, 3) with alpha= .63, Empathy (items 4, 5, 6) with alpha= .49, Social Relaxation (items 7, 8, 9) with alpha= .63,

Assertiveness (items 10, 11, 12) with alpha= .72, Altercentrism (items 13, 14, 15) with alpha= .49, Interaction Management (items 16, 17, 18) with alpha= .41, Expressiveness (items 19, 20, 21) with alpha= .41, Supportiveness (items 22, 23, 24) with alpha= .43, Immediacy (items 25, 26, 27) with alpha= .45, and Environmental Control (items 28, 29, 30) with alpha= .60) (Skowron, 2003).

Differentiation of Self Inventory- Short Form

The Differentiation of Self Inventory- Short Form is a 20 item scale measuring the ability to differentiate the self from interpersonal relationships and maintain a sense of self. There are 4 subscales: Emotional Connection (EC) measuring the distancing oneself from strong emotions on items 4, 7, and 15 (alpha= .84), Emotional Reactivity (ER) measuring the tendency to react to stressful situations with strong emotions on items 6, 9, 11, 14, 16, and 18 (alpha= .89), Formative Orientation (FO) measuring how much of the person's identity is intrinsically related to other people on items 2, 5, 8, 13, and 17 (alpha= .86), and Independent Persona (IP) measuring the ability for the person to maintain independence in close relationships on items 1, 3, 10, 12, 19, and 20 (alpha= .81) on a likert scale of 1 (not at all characteristic of me) to 6 (very characteristic of me). The scale is scored similar to the parent scale Differentiation of Self- Revised (Skowron & Schmitt, 2003) and all items are reverse scored except for items 1, 3, 7, 10, and 20 (Drake, 2011).

Procedure

A sample of adults from single-parent households, residing in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, were asked to participate in the research. Participants were educated regarding the aim of the study and the questionnaire were provided to them. To measure parentification, Parentification Questionnaire for Youth (PQY) was used, for Differentiation of Self; Differentiation of Self - Short Form (DoS-SF) was used and Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale (ICCS) measured interpersonal communication competence (see appendix E), following permission grant from respective authors (appendix A). Participants were approached using purposive sampling and once consent was established, they were then given individual questionnaires to complete in order to collect data, with thorough explanation of instructions, study nature, ethical concerns, confidentiality, etc. Only those who gave consent to participate in the study were included in the data collection. Once data was compiled, it was coded and entered into SPSS v. 23 and descriptives, correlation, reliability analysis, t-test and regression analysis were then used. PROCESS v.4.3 by Andrew F. Hayes was used for mediation analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Adhering to the American Psychological Association (APA) ethical guidelines is crucial to ensuring the well-being and rights of participants in this research. The research topic was approved by the ethical committee, ensuring its alignment with ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data

collection, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose and procedures. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences, safeguarding their autonomy and comfort. Additionally, permission was obtained from the author before using the scale, ensuring proper use and respect for intellectual property.

Chapter 3

Results

The current research study aimed to investigate the relationship between Parentification, Interpersonal Communication Competence and Differentiation of Self. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data collected from the participants. Descriptive statistics were determined for demographic variables of the study, Reliability analysis was conducted for the variables of Parentification, Interpersonal Communication Competence and Differentiation of Self. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was carried out to examine the nature of relationship between Parentification, Interpersonal Communication Competence and Differentiation of Self. Independent sample t-test and one-way independent measure ANOVA were carried out to compare demographics of age, gender, education, marital status, family system, birth order, number of siblings, personal and family income, life status of parent absent, parent currently with, and employment status of parent. Mediation analysis was done to understand the mediating effect of Differentiation of Self on the relationship between Parentification and Interpersonal Communication Competence, using PROCESS v. 4.3 by Andrew F. Hayes.

Table 1

Demographic description of the sample (N=306).

Characteristics of Participant		*f*	*(%)*	*M*	*(S.D)*
Gender					
	Male	143	39.5		
	Female	163	45		
Age					
	19 to 30 years	306	100		
Education				2.31	0.80
	Intermediate	33	13.5		
	Bachelors	98	35.9		
	Masters	175	30.4		
Marital Status				1.86	0.59
	Unmarried	192	53.0		
	Married	79	21.8		
	Engaged	35	9.7		
Family System				1.31	0.46
	Nuclear	211	58.3		
	Joint	95	26.2		
Monthly Family Income				1.7	0.64
	Below 100,000	123	34		
	100,000 to 500,000	152	42		
	Above 500,000	30	8.3		

Characteristics of Participant		f	(%)	M	(S.D)
Personal Income				1.47	0.63
	None	11			
	Below 50,000	240	51.4		
	50,000 to 100,000	44	26.5		
	Above 100,000	11	6.4		
Birth Order				2.11	1.14
	First	128	35.4		
	Second	62	17.1		
	Third	81	22.4		
	Fourth	24	6.6		
	Fifth	11	3		
Number of Siblings				3.50	1.17
	None	22	3.6		
	One	11	5.0		
	Two	109	10.5		
	Three	65	25.4		
	Four	44	27.1		
	Five	33	13.8		
	Six	22	2.8		
Life Status of Absent Parent				1.34	0.53
	Deceased	213	58.8		
	Divorced	83	22.9		
	Separated	10	2.8		
Parent residing with				1.81	0.59
	Father	89	24.6		
	Mother	187	51.7		
	Independent	30	8.3		
Employment Status of Parent residing with				1.66	0.72
	Employed	150	41.4		
	Unemployed	110	30.4		
	Self-employed	46	12.7		

Table 1 represents demographic characteristics of participants, which consists of a data of a total of 306 children of single-parent households. Based on gender, there was a total of 143 (39.5%) male participants and 163 (45%) female

participants. The sample consists of participants of ages 19 to 40 years, where there were 240 participants in the age range of 19 to 30 years (100%).

Separating participants based on education, we can identify there were 49 (13.5%) individuals who have intermediate level of education, 130 (35.9%) had undergraduate level of education, and 110 (30.4%) with masters. Out of these, 192 (53%) were unmarried, 79 (21.8%) married and 35 (9.7%) revealed to be engaged in intimate relationships. Focusing on the family system of living, 211 (58.3%) individuals hailed from a nuclear system of living, leaving behind 95 (26.2%) individuals who live in joint family systems.

Data on monthly family income was divided into three groups, 123 (34%) had a monthly family income value of below 100,000, 152 (42%) fall in the category of 100,000 to 500,000 and the remaining 30 (8.3%) individuals identified having family income of above 500,000. Similarly, when identifying personal income, 186 (51.4%) individuals revealed to earn below 50,000, 96 (26.5%) individuals earn between 50,000 to 100,000 and 23 (6.4%) earn more than 100,000 monthly.

When we look into the birth order in the family systems, five levels were identified; 128 (35.4%) individuals of the first birth order, 62 (17.1%) second, 81 (22.4%) third, 24 (6.6%) fourth, and 11 (3%) at the fifth birth order in their families. Looking into the number of siblings each participant had, 18 (5.0%) had one sibling, 38 (10.5%) with two, 92 (25.4%) had three siblings, 98 (27.1%) four, 50 (13.8%) five, and 10 (2.8%) had six number of siblings.

Since individuals were purposely approached for belonging to single-parent households, 213 (58.8%) identified that their absent parent had passed away, 83 (22.9%) had divorced parents, and 10 (2.8%) had separated. Out of these 306, 89 (24.6%) currently resided with their fathers, 187 (51.7%) with their mothers, and 30 (8.3%) individuals identified to be living independently. Lastly, the employment status of the present parent was identified that 150 (41.4%) parents were employed in either private or public type employments, 110 (30.4%) were unemployed and 46 (12.7%) were self-employed.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Reliability for all the scores on Scales (N=306).

Variables	k	α	M	SD	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Actual	Potential		
Parentification towards Parents	17	.77	71.8	3.22	17-85	67-80	0.65	-0.45
Parentification towards Siblings	9	.82	32.7	4.60	9-45	11-43	-0.02	0.36
DoS-SF	20	.62	80.14	6.88	20-120	69-98	0.64	-0.30
ICCS	30	.83	107.70	8.63	30-150	91-127	0.24	-0.63

Note: DoS-SF= Differentiation of Self- Short Form, ICCS= Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and alpha reliability coefficient for the variables of the study. The alpha reliability of the Parentification Questionnaire for Youth subscale Parentification towards Parents is .77 alpha reliability and subscale Parentification towards Siblings is .82 alpha reliability. On the DoS-SF= Differentiation of Self- Short Form alpha reliability was found to be .62. For the ICCS= Interpersonal Communication Competence scale, overall alpha reliability was .83. The data is normally distributed as skewness and kurtosis fall within their respective ranges.

Table 3

Pearson Product Moment Correlation between the variables of Parentification, Interpersonal Communication Competence and Differentiation of Self (N=306).

	Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Parentification towards Parents	-	.152**	.369**	-.132*
2	Parentification towards Siblings		-	-.263**	.063
3	ICCS			-	.011
4	DoS-SF				-

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. PI= Parentification Inventory, ICCS= Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale and DoS-SF= Differentiation of Self-Short Form

Table 3 shows correlation analysis on study variables. The results indicate significant correlations between the variables. No correlation is found between Parentification towards Parents and Differentiation of Self (DoS), however significant negative correlation is found between Parentification towards Siblings and Interpersonal Communication Competence (ICCS) (p<.01). Differentiation of Self (DoS) and Interpersonal Communication Competence (ICCS) show no correlation with each other. Parentification towards Parents is found to be positively correlated to Parentification towards Siblings and Interpersonal Communication Competence (p<.01). Significant negative correlation is found between Parentification towards Parents and Differentiation of Self (DoS).

Table 4

Indirect Effect of Mediation Analysis between Parentification towards Parents (category of Parentification) and Differentiation of Self through Interpersonal Communication Competence (N=306).

Mediator	β	Boot S.E	95% Boot CI	
			LL	UL
ICCS	.049***	0.016	0.020	0.082

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Education, marital status, family structure, birth order, number of siblings, family and personal income were used as covariates.

The indirect effect showed that differentiation of self was found to be a significant mediator between the relationship of parentification towards parents and interpersonal communication competence which indicated that increase in levels of parentification towards parents tends to decrease differentiation of self whereas decrease in parentification towards parents tends to increase level of self-differentiation.

Table 5

Direct effect of Mediation Analysis between Parentification towards Parents (category of Parentification) and Differentiation of Self through Interpersonal Communication Competence (N=306).

Predictors	ICCS		DoS-SF	
	β	S.E	β	S.E
Parentification towards Parents	.184***	0.083	-.075***	0.083
ICCS			.217**	0.057
R²	.46		.29	
F	25.21		11.13	

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Gender, age, education and marital status were used as covariates.

The results of direct effect show that parentification is found to be a significant positive predictor of interpersonal communication competence. Similarly, interpersonal communication competence was found to be a significant negative predictor of differentiation of self. Direct effect of parentification on interpersonal communication competence was significant.

Table 6

Indirect Effect of Mediation Analysis between Parentification towards Siblings (category of Parentification) and Differentiation of Self through Interpersonal Communication Competence (N=306).

Mediator	β	Boot S.E	95% Boot CI	
			LL	UL
ICCS	-0.026***	0.012	-0.052	-0.004

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Education, marital status, family structure, birth order, number of siblings, family and personal income were used as covariates.

The indirect effect showed that differentiation of self was found to be a significant mediator between the relationship of parentification towards parents and interpersonal communication competence which indicated that increase in levels of parentification towards parents tends to decrease differentiation of self whereas decrease in parentification towards parents tends to increase level of self-differentiation.

Table 7

Direct effect of Mediation Analysis between Parentification towards Siblings (category of Parentification) and Differentiation of Self through Interpersonal Communication Competence (N=306).

Predictors	ICCS		DoS-SF	
	β	S.E	β	S.E
Parentification towards Siblings	-.116***	0.095	.194***	0.083
ICCS			.203**	0.057
R²			.438	
F			22.99	

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Gender, age, education and marital status were used as covariates.

The results of direct effect show that parentification is found to be a significant negative predictor of interpersonal communication competence and differentiation of self. Similarly, interpersonal communication competence was found to be a significant negative predictor of differentiation of self. Direct effect of parentification on interpersonal communication competence was significant

Table 8

Independent Sample t-test comparing the effect of Family Structure on Parentification, Differentiation of Self, and Interpersonal Communication Competence (N=306).

Variables	Nuclear (n=208)		Joint (n=98)		t	p	95% Confidence Interval		Cohen's d
	M	S.D	M	S.D			LL	UL	
PI									
Parentification towards Parents	52.17	9.89	55.81	6.83	-3.29	.000	-5.82	-1.46	0.49
Parentification towards Siblings	28.51	8.39	23.41	5.46	5.48	.000	3.26	6.92	0.62
ICCS	102.13	14.26	116.45	6.96	-9.41	.000	-17.31	-11.32	0.15
DoS-SF	71.20	12.51	65.47	9.81	3.98	.000	2.90	8.55	0.81

*Note: Cohen's d = Effect size. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. DoS-SF=Differentiation of Self-Short Form, ICCS=Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale, LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit.*

Table 6 represents independent sample t-test that was run to compare differences due to family structure on the study variables. The results showed that there were significant differences between parentification towards siblings between nuclear and joint family setups, parentification towards parents is higher in joint family structure whereas parentification towards siblings is higher in nuclear family structures. The mean depicted that differentiation of self showed minimum difference between the two setup types, with minimum effect size (p<.00). Interpersonal communication competence was significantly greater in nuclear family setups with good effect size, as compared to joint family setups.

Table 9

Mean, Standard Deviation, and One-Way Analysis of Variance of Parentification, Differentiation of Self and Interpersonal Communication Competence across education (N=306).

Variables	Intermediate (n=33)		Bachelors (n=98)		Masters (n=175)		$F_{(3,303)}$	$\eta2$	Post hoc
	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D			
PI Parentification towards Parents	44.33	10.82	53.15	8.66	55.14	8.09	21.94***	0.69	3>2 >1
Parentification towards Siblings	24.66	5.52	29.54	7.57	25.81	8.17	8.80***	0.62	3>2 >1
ICCS	103.33	9.17	100.27	10.01	110.97	15.24	21.83***	1.06	3>1 >2
DoS-SF	73.00	15.22	74.16	11.63	66.00	10.36	18.00***	0.92	3>2 >1

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. DoS-SF=Differentiation of Self-Short Form, ICCS=Interpersonal Communication Competence Scal.

The results of one-way independent measure ANOVA depicted that there were significant differences in parentification towards parents for any of the education groups. However individuals with masters level of education displayed highest value for parentification towards siblings, with medium effect size.

It was identified that differentiation of self and interpersonal communication competence was highest for individuals with bachelors level of education, followed by doctorate and then masters, with moderate effect size. For further pair-wise comparisons, a Post Hoc test (Gabriel) indicated that the third group showed highest significant group differences.

Table 10

Mean, Standard Deviation, and One-Way Analysis of Variance of Parentification, Differentiation of Self and Interpersonal Communication Competence across Birth Order (N=306).

Variables	First (n=110)		Second (n=65)		Third (n=87)		Fourth (n=22)		Fifth (n=22)		F (4,301)	$\eta2$	Post hoc
	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D			
PI Parentification towards Parents	54.40	7.34	52.89	8.76	53.64	7.99	43.50	11.77	58.00	13.30	9.03***	0.99	5>3>2>1>4
Parentification towards Siblings	23.30	6.54	31.00	5.27	28.27	9.36	27.00	4.09	27.00	10.23	12.21***	0.84	2>3>1
ICCS	105.80	13.32	111.58	15.14	107.91	4.84	107.50	5.62	91.50	1.53	9.63***	1.52	2>1>3>4>5
DoS-SF	64.46	11.83	73.56	7.27	73.69	14.22	63.00	3.07	70.00	7.16	13.28***	1.24	3>2>5>4>1

*Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. DoS-SF=Differentiation of Self-Short Form, ICCS=Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale*

The results of one-way independent measure ANOVA depicted that there were significant differences in the comparisons for birth order among children of single-parent households. The highest difference was noted between the individuals with first and fifth birth order in their families, with a gradual decrease in difference sequentially from the fifth to the first.

For the construct of differentiation of self among the birth orders, fourth showed the highest value and fifth birth order showed the lowest value across the variable, with good effect size.

Interpersonal communication competence was highest for second birth order with very good effect size. For further pair-wise comparisons, a Post Hoc test (Gabriel) was conducted and significant differences were noted.

Table 11

Mean, Standard Deviation, and One-Way Analysis of Variance of Parentification, Differentiation of Self and Interpersonal Communication Competence across Number of Siblings (N=306).

Variables	None (n=22)		One (n=11)		Two (n=101)		Three (n=65)		Four (n=44)		Five (n=33)		Six (n=22)		$F(5,300)$	$\eta 2$	Post hoc
	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D			
PtP	61.50	5.62	55.00	0.00	53.10	7.17	53.23	9.22	50.25	7.34	44.33	9.96	65.50	5.62	21.95***	1.09	5>4>2>30>>1>6
PtS	18.00	9.21	31.00	0.00	25.19	7.68	29.80	5.72	30.00	7.60	25.00	7.59	30.00	7.16	11.29***	1.02	5>2>3>4>6>1>0
DoS-SF	117.5	3.57	113.0	0.00	108.1	15.56	109.2	14.3	102.7	10.43	93.00	6.58	107.0	14.3	10.49***	1.83	5>4>2
ICCS	63.50	8.70	66.00	0.00	71.98	11.17	68.46	11.19	74.43	18.12	66.33	7.07	61.04	2.88	5.87***	1.61	2>4>0

*Note: *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$, ***$p<.001$. PtP= Parentification towards Parents, PtS=Parentification towards Siblings, DoS-SF=Differentiation of Self-Short Form, ICCS=Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale.*

The results of one-way independent measure ANOVA depicted that there were significant differences in the level of parentification towards siblings among the number of siblings of individuals from single-parent households; the highest value was noted for the group with 6 number of siblings, with medium effect size. The Post-hoc test (Gabriel) was conducted to see pair-wise comparisons between the groups and analysis also revealed that group 5 had the highest level of difference compared to the others.

Table 12

Mean, Standard Deviation, and One-Way Analysis of Variance of Parentification, Differentiation of Self and Interpersonal Communication Competence across different Monthly Family Income groups (N=306).

Variables	Below 100,000 (n=143)		100,000 to 500,000 (n=130)		Above 500,000 (n=33)		F (2,302)	$\eta2$	Post hoc
	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D			
PI									
Parentification towards Parents	52.75	7.88	53.20	9.27	54.67	13.80	1.37	0.90	-
Parentification towards Siblings	29.16	7.29	52.46	8.58	26.00	5.80	9.53***	3.97	3>2>1
DoS-SF	104.1	14.63	108.4	13.92	107.3	13.11	3.48*	1.38	-
ICCS	68.3	11.38	68.28	11.00	79.36	15.34	9.55***	1.14	1>3>2

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. DoS-SF=Differentiation of Self-Short Form, ICCS=Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale.

The results of one-way independent measure ANOVA depicted that there were significant differences among parentification towards siblings for the three income groups. Differentiation of self was lowest for the individuals with monthly income higher than 500,000, and interpersonal communication competence decreased for the income groups as we go from lowest group to highest group, the moderate effect sizes.

Table 13

Mean, Standard Deviation, and One-Way ANOVA of Parentification, Differentiation of Self and Interpersonal Communication Competence across different Personal Income groups (N=306).

Variables	None (n=11)		Below 50,000 (n=240)		Above 100,000 (n=44)		F (2,302)	η2	Post hoc
	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D			
PI									
Parentification towards Parents	58.00	0.00	55.01	9.49	58.75	4.43	14.75***	0.85	2>3 >1> 4
Parentification towards Siblings	19.00	0.00	28.21	7.95	21.50	8.17	6.74***	0.76	3>2 >1
ICCS	115.0	0.00	114.7	13.1	111.5	18.5	8.23***	1.35	2>3 3>2 >1>
DoS-SF	65.00	0.00	69.84	11.6	71.50	5.23	30.49***	1.04	4

*Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. DoS-SF=Differentiation of Self-Short Form, ICCS=Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale.*

The results of one-way independent measure ANOVA depicted that there were significant differences among the personal income groups for individuals from single-parent households. Interpersonal communication competence was seen to be highest for individuals with personal income of more than 100,000, with good effect size. For further pair-wise comparisons, a Post Hoc test (Gabriel) showed that significant differences were identified between the personal income groups for the study variables, with group 3 showing the highest differences.

Table 14

Mean, Standard Deviation, and One-Way Analysis of Variance of Parentification, Differentiation of Self and Interpersonal Communication Competence across Parent Residing With (N=306).

Variables	Father (n=88)		Mother (n=185)		Independent (n=33)		F (2,303)	$\eta 2$	Post hoc
	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D			
PI									
Parentification towards Parents	46.12	9.69	56.95	7.35	52.33	4.09	57.0***	0.63	2>3 >1
Parentification towards Siblings	30.87	5.11	25.73	8.87	22.66	2.66	19.91***	0.60	3>1 >2
DoS-SF	98.50	16.2	111.2	11.1	103.3	12.0	30.40***	1.03	1>3 >2
ICCS	70.09	13.7	69.27	11.6	68.00	8.96	0.37	0.98	-

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. *DoS-SF=Differentiation of Self-Short Form, ICCS=Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale.*

The results of one-way independent measure ANOVA depicted that there were significant differences among the study variables for the groups of residence parent. Parentification for parents and siblings was found to be higher across the groups of father compared to mother residence, with medium effect sizes. Individuals in independent living systems however showed middle ranging values among those.

Differentiation of self was noted to be highest in the individuals who were independent in their living, and interpersonal communication competence was highest in the individuals living with their fathers, with good effect size. For further pair-wise comparisons, a Post Hoc test (Gabriel) showed no significant differences between the groups for study variables.

Table 15

Mean, Standard Deviation, and One-Way Analysis of Variance of Parentification, Differentiation of Self and Interpersonal Communication Competence across Employment Status of Present Parent (N=306).

Variables	Employed (n=154)		Unemployed (n=130)		Self-Employed (n=22)		F (2,303)	η2	Post hoc
	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D			
PI									
Parentification towards Parents	53.28	7.98	55.32	8.97	42.00	10.23	22.66***	0.69	3>2 >1
Parentification towards Siblings	29.21	7.60	24.35	8.12	25.50	2.55	14.80***	0.61	1>2
ICCS	105.4	15.2	108.9	13.5	102.5	0.51	3.35*	1.11	-
									3>2
DoS-SF	68.55	14.2	71.59	9.14	62.00	2.04	7.00**	0.95	>1

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. DoS-SF=Differentiation of Self-Short Form, ICCS=Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale.

The results of one-way independent measure ANOVA depicted that there were significant differences noted for the employment status of the parents of parentified individuals. Highest levels of parentification towards parents though was found to be for the individuals whose parent was unemployed, while highest level of parentification towards siblings was for individuals with employed parents. Differentiation of self was seen to be lowest for individuals with self-employed parents. For further pair-wise comparisons, a Post Hoc test (Gabriel) showed significant differences between the employment statuses of the parentifying parent for the study variables.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between parentification, differentiation of self and interpersonal communication competence of adults from single-parent households. Data was collected from various public and private locations (parks, residential locality, work places, friend groups, and universities) of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, and multiple statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS, including descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, independent sample T-tests, ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis. The results provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the study variables.

It was hypothesized that there will be a negative relationship between Parentification and Differentiation of Self. Findings concluded that there is a significant negative relationship between the two variables. This finding is also supported in the literature, for instance, Hooper (2003) studied the relationship and found that the increased levels of parentification showed significantly lowered differentiation of self with a unique effect of increased distress. Similarly, in a study of 783 college students, parentification and mental health symptoms were studied with perceived unfairness and differentiation of self (DoS) as mediators and significant effects were noted for differentiation of self as it showed negative association with

parentification (Jankowski, 2011).

The study also assumed that there will be differences in the levels of parentification and differentiation of self with respect to the differences in participant demographics. The findings show that some demographic variables have significant difference with the variables of interest.

Firstly, it was assumed that gender would create a difference in the level of parentification and differentiation of self, yet current findings reveal that the levels of both variables are almost similar for both gender groups, therefore leading to the conclusion that gender does not create a difference between the parentification experience for both Pakistani men and women. Literature suggests that this might be due to the multicultural differences that are often at play to highlight such results, such as in a study by Kim and Lee (2019), it was concluded that cultural differences need to be considered when managing levels of parentification in the sample, since these multicultural differences come into play. Traditionally accepted Western theories of parentification imply that women experience it higher than men, whereas the difference between the two can be understood by breaking it down into the subtypes of emotional and instrumental parentification. This then shows that while women experience higher emotional parentification, men experience more instrumental parentification (Hooper, 2011). The current study focused on the subtypes of Parentification towards Parents and Parentification towards Siblings, in-line with the instrument designed by Borchet (2020) and results revealed that there was no significant difference between the genders

for this experience.

Further hypotheses assumed that there will be differences in the levels of parentification and differentiation of self according to the various demographic variables that indirectly effect the whole relationship as covariates.

the In the present study, it was family structure, marital status, education level, family and personal income, number of siblings and birth order that presented with significant differences between the variables of interest. Firstly, it was hypothesized that family structure of an individual would create a difference in how parentification and differentiation of self are correlated. Karagöbek (2014) studied the effects of maternal parentification and the various types of socio-economic factors that come to impact the children's self-concept, and support current findings. The current study found significant differences in the way family structure impacts the relationship between parentification and differentiation of self. The results show that participants belonging to a joint family structure experienced higher parentification and therefore lower differentiation of self.

It was found that unmarried individuals experienced higher parentification. Moreover, lesser income was seen to reflect strongly with parentification levels. This goes to show that individuals in the state of higher vulnerability experienced the effects of parentification more, whereas with the increase in education, change in marital status, living within a nuclear setup and earning income was associated with decreasing levels of

parentification. A study examined the effects of parentification with parental neglect, stress, education level, marital status and financial status and found that these variables were significant predictors for parental neglect and higher perceived parentification (Chitiyo, 2014).

The factors of birth order and number of siblings created significant differences in the levels of parentification experienced. In the birth other, individuals with fifth birth order were seen to experience parentification at the highest level, similarly resulting in decreased differentiation of self. The number of siblings that an individual had also presented significant results; the highest number of siblings reported in the data were six, and this group experienced the highest level of parentification and lowest level of differentiation of self. In a study conducted on the model of family influence, birth order and number of siblings in relation to parentification, results were concluded that family structures are significantly impacted by these variables that a family is comprised of. Since family defines the roles that are taken up for functioning, the effect of parentification greatly becomes varied for each individual according to their birth order and the number of siblings they had, leading to the understanding that these variables are significant predictors of the level of parentification for each child (McKenna 1995). Further studies conducted on similar factors show similar results, such as Borchet (2020) found that with the increase in family liabilities, the greater level of parentification was experienced by the child for various reasons. This leads to the understanding that the more responsibility there is, whether in the

shape of siblings, unemployment of parents, etc the more parentified burden there is on the parentified individual (Borchet, 2020).

Another such study stated that the quality of sibling relationships partially mediated the relation between parentification and self-esteem and highlighted the importance of assessing the quality of sibling relationships when an individual or family presents for clinical services related to family dysfunction, indicating that while there may be positive outcomes of parentification due to certain factors, there is the strong need to identify the familial roles and dynamics for making adequate clinical implications (Borchet, 2020).

Another hypothesis stated that interpersonal communication competence will mediate the relationship between parentification and differentiation of self. The present findings conclude that interpersonal communication competence significantly mediates the relationship between the two variables. This finding is also supported by literature that focuses on the involvement of adult attachment styles relating to an individual's level of differentiation of the self, thus impacting whether an individual is highly differentiated or not with respect to how effectively they communicate. For instance, in a study by Hooper (2013) the environment and the parent (attachment figure) were concluded to serve as the force that inhibits the secure base and the attachment process, and therefore reflects on the competency in communication of an individual who is experiencing parentification. Another study examining the association between the levels

of differentiation of self on romantic relationship outcomes while examining the possibility of communication competence concluded interpersonal communication competence to mediate the relationship, suggesting that differentiation of self may be usefully accessed through more overt communication behaviors, which in turn might be related to having desired relationship outcomes (Wilson, 2016).

Similarly, in a study addressing the positive effects of parentification and discussing possibly positive health outcomes for students who had been parentified, it was found that individuals with higher parentification had also developed higher competencies such as resilience and empathy, leading to better interpersonal relationships. This finding aids in supporting the hypothesis by recognizing that interpersonal communication competence increases the likelihood for developing some positive outcomes in adults from single-parent households (van der Mijl, 2017).

Conclusion

The findings of the current study reveals that there is a negative relationship between parentification and differentiation of self of adults from single-parent households, where interpersonal communication competence significantly mediates the relationship in a positive direction. Parentification towards parents and towards siblings show similar trend in their relationships with differentiation of self and interpersonal communication competence. In conclusion the findings of the current study are in accordance with its

assumptions and stand true in light of current literature.

Implications

- The findings of this research offers the implication that multicultural differences are an important factor that has to be considered in conceptualizing the phenomena of parentification in the Pakistani context, and therefore implies that Pakistani culture and society presents similar challenges to a parentified man or woman irrespective of gender in adulthood.

- The research also offers a view into the application of the family systems theory and present important markers for clinical care and intervention. Individuals facing higher parentification present lower differentiation of self as per the current study therefore it is of valuable nature to investigate into the clinical health outcomes associated with this finding and how this may present in the healthcare setup.

Limitations and Suggestions

The Current study dealt with its own set of obstacles and challenges, for instance the limited number of participants included, which limits the generalizability of the concept being studied. The construct of parentification is relatively under-studied in Pakistan and this presented as a challenge to source relevant literature that caters to the specific cultural norms and relevant implications. Therefore the same is suggested for future research, as a larger population sample with wider demographic differences would allow for further

implications to be made and understood especially in the field of clinical and family therapy concerning Pakistani youth experiencing the phenomenon of parentification.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire Permission

Parentification Questionnaire for Youth

Judyta Borchet <judyta.borchet@ug.edu.pl>   Thu, Nov 16, 2023, 3:49 PM   ☆   ☺   ↰   ⋮
to me ▾

Dear Khadija Ahmad,

Attached you will find the Parentification Questionnaire for Youth (PQY), which was designed for Polish adolescents. I suggest you translate the Polish items to the Pakistani language (attached you will find also my English translation of the questionnaire, to support that work) and revise these sentences so they refer to the past.

I wish you the best with your important work and feel free to email me if you had any questions or wanted to publish the results of your study. I would be more than happy to assist you and your supervisor.

Best regards,
Dr. Judyta Borchet

Od: Khadija Ahmad <khadija.ah56@gmail.com>
Wysłane: wtorek, 14 listopada 2023 08:45
•••
•••

APPENDIX B

Data Collection Permission

Bahria University
Discovering Knowledge

February 16, 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

REQUEST FOR DATA COLLECTION

It is stated that **Syeda Manaal Babur** Enrollment No. <u>01-275222-020</u> is a student of MS Clinical Psychology Bahria University Islamabad Campus conducting research on "**Relationship between Depressive Realism, Optimism Bias and Sense of Control of working individuals**" under supervision of undersigned. It is requested that kindly allow her to collect the data from your esteemed institution.

Regards,

Dr. Saima Kalsoom
Principal BSPP / HOD PP
Bahria School of Professional Psychology
Bahria University
E-8 Islamabad

Bahria School of Professional Psychology Shangrilla Road E-8 Islamabad
Tel: 051-9260002 Ext. No. 1406 Fax: 051-9260889

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent

I, Khadija Ahmad, student of MS Clinical Psychology, Bahria University, am conducting my dissertation (a research study) under the supervision of Dr. Saima Kalsoom. My topic is "Parentification, Interpersonal Communication Competence and Differentiation of Self of adults from single-parent households".

I shall be thankful of your kind cooperation.

Undertaking:

I have been informed about the purpose of the study.

I am willing to participate in this research.

I am assured that my confidentiality will be maintained.

I have the right to withdraw at any given moment.

I am ensured that the data will be used for research and academic purposes only.

I am assured that my data will be kept safe at every stage during research

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Researcher:

Khadija Ahmad

Student of MS Clinical Psychology

Department of Professional Psychology

Bahria University Islamabad Campus

Supervisor:

Dr. Saima Kalsoom

Principal of School of Professional Psychology

Bahria University Islamabad Campus

If you wish to inquire further, you can contact me at

Khadija.ah56@gmail.com

APPENDIX D

Demographic Sheet

Demographic sheet

1. Gender

- Male

- Female

- Other

2. Age _____

3. Marital status _____

4. Education _____

5. Monthly family income _____

6. Personal income _____

7. Family system

- Joint

- Nuclear

8. No. and gender of siblings _____

9. Status of parent absent

- Deceased

- Separated

- Divorced

- Other: _____

10. Parent currently residing with _____

11. Education of parent residing with _____

APPENDIX E

Sample copy of Questionnaire

1

Instructions: Below, there are statements about your thoughts, behaviors, and feelings connected with <u>you and your family</u>. Please, read each of them carefully. Choose your answer based on how true the sentence is on a scale from 1 (never true) and 5 (always true).

1- never true	2- rarely true	3- sometimes true	4- often true	5- always true

There are no wrong or right answers here. Please, make sure you have answered every question as accurately as possible.

1	I help my parent/parents make important decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I feel appreciated by my family.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am asked to do the shopping more often than other members of my family.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Most of the children living in my surroundings contribute to the family budget.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I am very happy with the role I perform in my family.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I work and contribute to the family budget.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I help resolve disputes between my parents (other adult guardians in my family).	1	2	3	4	5
8	I have a feeling that our family is like a team and that we cooperate well.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I comfort my parents when they are sad.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I worry about my parents when I am not at home.	1	2	3	4	5
11	When I earn or get money, I give it to my parents.	1	2	3	4	5

12	I sacrifice myself for my family, but it goes unnoticed by other family members.	1	2	3	4	5
13	My family is open about my tasks and responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I feel disappointed by my parents and other family members.	1	2	3	4	5
15	It seems that my feelings are not taken into account in my family.	1	2	3	4	5
16	For some reason, it is difficult for me to trust my parents.	1	2	3	4	5
17	Sometimes I think I'm more responsible than my parents are.	1	2	3	4	5
18	It is my job to comfort my siblings when they are sad or have emotional difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5
19	I replace my siblings in household chores (e.g., cleaning, walking the dog).	1	2	3	4	5
20	I am responsible for helping my siblings do their school homework.	1	2	3	4	5
21	It's mainly me who points out to my siblings that they behave rudely and brings them back to order.	1	2	3	4	5
22	I feel guilty if I don't share with my siblings the gift I have got.	1	2	3	4	5
23	I worry about my siblings when I am not at home.	1	2	3	4	5
24	It is my duty to help my siblings with housework or school homework.	1	2	3	4	5
25	I defend my siblings and explain them to my parents.	1	2	3	4	5
26	I feel sorry for my siblings when I have to leave them for longer.	1	2	3	4	5

2

These are questions concerning your thoughts and feelings about yourself and relationships with others. Please read each statement carefully and decide how much the statement is generally true of you on a 1 (not at all) to 6 (very) scale. If you believe that an item does not pertain to you (e.g., you are not currently married or in a committed relationship, or one or both of your parents are deceased), please answer the item according to your best guess about what your thoughts and feelings would be in that situation. Be sure to answer every item and try to be as honest and accurate as possible in your responses.

	Not at all characteristic of me				Very characteristic of me	
1. I tend to remain pretty calm even under stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I usually need a lot of encouragement from others when starting a big job or task.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. No matter what happens in my life, I know that I'll never lose my sense of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I tend to distance myself when people get too close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. When my spouse/partner criticizes me, it bothers me for days.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. At times my feelings get the best of me and I have trouble thinking clearly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I'm often uncomfortable when people get too close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I feel a need for approval from virtually everyone in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. At times, I feel as if I'm riding an emotional roller-coaster.	1	2	3	4	5	6

10. There's no point in getting upset about things I cannot change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I'm overly sensitive to criticism.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I'm fairly self-accepting.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I often agree with others just to appease them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. If I have had an argument with my spouse/partner, I tend to think about it all day.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. When one of my relationships becomes very intense, I feel the urge to run away from it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. If someone is upset with me, I can't seem to let it go easily.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I often feel unsure when others are not around to help me make a decision.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I'm very sensitive to being hurt by others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. My self-esteem really depends on how others think of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I tend to feel pretty stable under stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6

3

Here are some statements about how people interact with other people. For each statement, circle the response that best reflects YOUR communication with others. Be honest in your responses and reflect on your communication behavior very carefully.

	Almost never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
1. I allow friends to see who I really am.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Other people know what I'm thinking.	1	2	3	4	5

3. I reveal how I feel to others.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I can put myself in others' shoes.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I don't know exactly what others are feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Other people think that I understand them.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am comfortable in social situations.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel relaxed in small group gatherings.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel insecure in groups of strangers.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When I've been wronged, I confront the person who wrong me.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I have trouble standing up for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I stand up for my rights.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My conversations are pretty one-sided.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I let others know that I understand what they say.	1	2	3	4	5
15. My mind wanders during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5
16. My conversations are characterized by smooth shifts from one topic to the next.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I take charge of conversations I'm in by negotiating what topics we talk about.	1	2	3	4	5
18. In conversations with friends, I perceive not only what they say but what they don't say.	1	2	3	4	5
19. My friends can tell when I'm happy or sad.	1	2	3	4	5

20. It's difficult to find the right words to express myself.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I express myself well verbally.	1	2	3	4	5
22. My communication is usually descriptive, not evaluative.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I communicate with others as though they're equals.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Others would describe me as warm.	1	2	3	4	5
25. My friends truly believe that I care about them.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I try to look others in the eye when I speak with them.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I tell people when I feel close to them.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I accomplish my communication goals.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I can persuade others to my position.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I have trouble convincing others to do what I want them to do.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX F

Plagiarism Report

khadija

18%	14%	10%	6%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

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