Authoritarian Parenting Style and Stress as Predictors of Suicidal Ideations among University Undergraduates: Could Resilience Play a Moderating Role

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between authoritarian parenting styles and stress as predictors of suicidal ideation among university undergraduates. Purposive sampling method was utilized in the selection of two hundred (200) undergraduates from four different departments; they include 140 female and 60 males. Their age ranged from 18 to 25 years with mean age of 22.50 years and standard deviation of 3.50. Four instruments, namely: Scale for Suicidal Ideation, Authoritarian Sub-Scale of Parental Authority Questionnaire, Stress Sub-Scale of Depression Anxiety and Stress, and Brief Resilience Scale were used for data collection. Correlational design was used as the design for the study, while moderated regression analysis was adopted as statistical tool for analysis. The result revealed that authoritarian parenting style positively and significantly predicted suicidal ideation at (β =2.76, t=5.50, p<.001). Also, stress positively and significantly predicted suicidal ideation at (β =2.64, t=5.96, p<.001). It was also found that resilience moderated the predictive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and suicidal ideation at (β =-3.71, t=-4.35, p<.001). Furthermore, resilience also moderated the relationship between stress and suicidal ideation at (β =-1.96, t=-2.52, p<.05). Based on the finding, the researchers recommended among others, that university undergraduates' should be properly oriented on the possible stressors that they should expect to see in their journey of student hood, so as not to be taken unaware (preparedness).

Keywords: authoritarian parenting style, stress, suicidal ideation, resilience

Introduction

University undergraduate period is associated with numerous stressors that can stimulate negative emotions. Thus, could trigger maladaptive behaviours like: substance use disorder; in search for coping strategies, depressive symptoms; in occasions of failures, and anxiety;

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in situations that requires deadline. In some cases, the depressive symptoms could be so unbearable and overwhelming that some undergraduates consider suicide as an option. Hence, suicidal ideation or actual suicide in rear occasions. Notably, the negative perception of most academic expectations, intrapersonal, as well as interpersonal factors that some student sees as stressors are resultant from the mental schema which they developed over time; which could be ensuing from their family dynamics. Such as, the mode of parents'child-interaction (parental style) they experienced over time, leading to the formation of depressogenic model. This depressogenic mode, serves as the yardstick for measuring the aforementioned stimulus as stressors, resulting to constant negative emotions. Hence, the withdrawal behaviour associated with depression, and could stimulate suicidal ideation. For instance, the amount of love and care a child enjoys, could relatively result to selfacceptance, or could lead to low self-esteem. By implication, an undergraduate that enjoyed parental care as well as care and love from significant other, would accept and love self, as well as freely explore his or her environment, and as well, develop more adaptively compare to one devoid of parental love, or one that grow up in a hostile family. Such individual could grow to be timid, none associative, withdrawn, and prone to maladaptive behaviour; suicidal ideation, inclusive.

The rate of suicidal ideation and suicide among undergraduates is highly alarming. For instance, the case of the 100 level student of Obafemi Awolowo University that was found dead in an uncompleted building on the 15th June 2023 after taking a poisonous substance (sniper) (Vanguard, 2023). Another was the incident of a 20-year-old student of University of Ilorin that committed suicide on 18th October 2023 over a loan she gave to her boyfriend (Vanguard, 2023). As well as that of the 100-level female student of Nasarawa State University (NSUK), Keffi, that committed suicide by consuming a poisonous substance on 9th December, 2023, (Vanguard, 2023). Moreover, suicidal ideation and completed suicide is a global phenomenon among youth in general, and is significantly high among university undergraduates. Akram et al. (2020), rated suicidal ideation among UK university students at 37.3%, Quarshie et al. (2019), rated suicidal ideation among nursing and midwifery college students in Ghana at 23.3%, Ogboghodo et al. (2018), rated suicidal ideation among young persons in Benin-City, Edo State, Nigeria as 14. 9%, while Li et al. (2014), rated

suicidal ideation among Chinese college students as 10.72%. Moreover, Mortiers et al. (2017) rated trans-border suicidal ideation and behaviour among college students as 10.6%. Thus, suicidal ideation as well as suicidal behaviour is a global occurrence that needed urgent attention as to the investigation for the possible psychological factors that can predispose an undergraduate to suicide as well as the possible factor(s) that could moderate such predisposition.

Since Tobih et al. (2024) have recently, with empirical evidence, identified authoritarian parenting style as among the predictors of suicidal ideation observed among university undergraduates, and the association between stress symptoms and suicidal ideation, such association serves as the rationale for the selection of authoritarian parenting style and stress symptoms as variables in this present study. Hence, this study aimed at examining the predictive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and stress, on suicidal ideation. Furthermore, since resilience is a positive psychological factor, with potency of absorbing the shock an individual encounter during serious life challenges, the researchers selected resilience as a possible moderator of the likely predictive influence of authoritarian parenting style and stress symptoms on suicidal ideation. Hence, making it of notable research to investigate the moderating role of resilience on the predictive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and stress on suicidal ideation among undergraduates.

Stress as one of the study variables originated from a Latin word stringere, which means to draw tight, and was used in the 17th century to explain suffering, hard times or affliction (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997). Stress is any negative stimulus that an individual sees as a threat to their survival. Thus, for a thing or situation to be seen as stressful by a person, it must be perceived as a threat to either the survival, and or growth of the person. Moorhead and Griffin (1989) defined stress as an adaptive response of an individual to a stimulus which places unnecessary psychological or physical expectation on the person.

Stress can be seen as an outcome of the discrepancies associated with the demands on an individual and their knowledge, competency or abilities. Thus, could incapacitate the individual's ability to cope or function effectively. Klatzkin et al. (2022) Stated that stress is

an emotional burden felt by an individual who is experiencing obstacles or demands that are affecting his or her mental, physical, and emotional state. By implication, stress occurs when an individual is experiencing a high amount of tasks or burden, such that the individual is unable to cope with; hence, the person's body starts responding negatively to the situation, resulting to stress (Schaper & Stengel, 2022). Stress does not only have to do with an individual's ability to cope with the excessive workload, it also have to do with the person's deficiency in competence, knowledge, and capacity as regards to a particular task.

Not all stress are completely negative, some form of stress can enhance productivity when it is within the capacity of the individual. A rational amount of stress and challenges stimulates an individual into looking for means of improving on their skills, finding better ways to be more productive, as well as pushing themselves into becoming a better version of themselves. Such stress is referred to as eustress (positive stress). However, when the individual stretches themselves to their highest point of elasticity, it becomes harmful; hence, hampering productive outcome and can also have negative physical and psychological implications. At that point, the stress become distress (negative stress), and could lead to maladaptive behaviour.

Parenting styles according to Tobih et al. (2024), are those unique parenting techniques that set one's approach to parenting apart from another. These techniques have to do with the patterns of behaviour, feelings, and attitude that parents uses in shaping their children's behaviour. Parenting style is also described by Spera (2005) as the methods, mindsets, and conduct that parents or other caregivers' employs while interacting with or disciplining the children. According to Darling and Steinberg (1993), it is the sum total of a parent's behaviour, attitudees, and feelings towards their children as well as how they inculcate those emotions on their children. A child's experiences and impression of how their parents relates with them have a lasting effect on how they grow into adulthood. It also affect how they view themselves, their personalities, their behaviour, and other aspects of their life. Therefore, parenting style directly impact how a child develops their personality.

Since parenting style is essential in the formation of one's personality as well as behaviour, research on parenting styles are predicated on the theory that different parents' utilizes

different parenting styles, and these different styles could have big impact on the growth, well-being, and behavioural patterns of their children as they grow as well as, could be pathological, resulting to maladaptation. According to Harris (2021), a parent that is overly strict or too protective can have a detrimental effect on the children, and as a result, may lead to anxiety in the adolescent years. On the other hand, children who see their parents or caregivers as being committed to taking care of their needs as well as contributing significantly in their well-being, function more adaptively, and possess more effective social skills. Prime et al (2020) assert that a parent's involvement in their child's life reflects the parenting style of their own parents. In Prime et al. (2020)'s view, children raised by disillusioned parents may be more likely to engage in maladaptive behaviours like anxiety, depression, psychoactive substance abuse, physical dysfunction, nervousness, and could experience financial difficulties. A parent's style of parenting is also an indicator of the level of love they experienced during their own formative years.

Authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles were the three different parenting styles that Baumrind (1967) used to conceptualize parenting techniques. However, this present study focuses on authoritarian parenting style and it involves those parents who are a bit willing to communicate with their children on the reason behind their actions. However, maintaining strong opinions about appropriate behaviour of their children. These parents demands that their children should behave in a responsible manner. They anticipate appropriate behaviour from their children and they are firm mannered and takes a directed approach to communicating as their mode of interaction with their children.

Some characteristics of authoritarian parents:

- 1. Their expectations are high and their rules a strictly implemented
- 2. Their interaction is usually with little warmth and a bit nurturing
- 3. Communications and feedbacks are limited
- 4. They are highly controlling
- 5. Punishment and discipline are used as tools for enforcement
- 6. Independency is not encouraged by them
- 7. The feelings and opinion of their children does not always count

Authoritarian parenting have always been linked to maladaptive behaviours like:

- 1. High aggressive behaviour among their children
- 2. Their children exhibits low self-esteem
- 3. Poor emotional regulation among their children
- 4. Difficulties in social skills among their children
- 5. Their pattern of parenting is usually associated with some mental health problems.

Resilience as the moderating variable in this study was defined by Lengnick-Hall et al (2011) as an individual's coping mechanisms such as, the speed at which an individual returns to an expected efficacy rate after an unexpected failure. So to say, an undergraduate's resilience could be seen as the speed at which the student recovers from shocks associated with life stress. According to Coutu (2012), resilience is the ability and skills to remain vigorous in face of unfavourable situations and as well as stressful times. Cooper et al. (2013) opinionated that resilience is the potential of an individual returning back to normalcy and still efficacious during troubling time and still thrives afterwards. Cope et al. (2016) stated that an individual with high resilience enjoys positive emotion which makes it possible for the person to circumvent the negative emotions associated with setbacks, and still pushes through a stressful conditions, and come out successful at the end.

According to Phina et al. (2022), resilience could be viewed as accumulated skills of an individual which can be learn, developed and maintained; and are helpful in resisting negative emotions associated with stressor. Resilience could be learned and cultivated in an individual and its outcome is positively impactful. Shin et al. (2012) opined that a resilient person can easily recuperate from failed attempts and still retain the confidence to handle the challenges associated with the failed tasks. As such, resilience among undergraduates is among the necessary psychological characteristics that could enable them to role with academic, as well as other social and family stressors, and still be productive not only in their studies, but in other areas of their life. According to Morrison (2007), resilience is an individual's potential to concur failure and still continues to be effective in times of high expectations.

Theoretically, this study anchors on the hostility theory of Horney (1994) which postulated that hostility is as a result of accumulated aggression that a child developed due to learned basic evil. Hostility theory avers that basic evil result from all manner of inappropriate and stress filled parental behaviours that can be internalized, and could manifest in form of intrapersonal hostility (self-hurting behaviours) or interpersonal hostility (directed others). By implication, approach to parenting can stimulate suicidal ideation as well as behaviour through intrapersonal hostility. Furthermore, the leaned basic evil resulting from stress filled parenting approach as well as family crises could interact with stressful situations associated with the period of undergraduate studies, such as failed academic responsibilities, intra and interpersonal stressors, to stimulate negative thought of worthlessness and sense of hopelessness. In other to escape such demoralizing negative perception of self, suicidal ideation becomes the last resort. However, the amount of the level of resilience possessed by an undergraduate could serve as a protective psychological factor that could inhibit suicidal ideation, even during stressful situations.

There are some empirical evidence by other scholars on these study variable (authoritarian parenting style, stress, suicidal ideation and resilience), which aimed at examining and understanding of these variable. For instance, Tobih et al (2024), Uwaoma, et al (2023) Nunes and Mota (2023), Arafat et al. (2022) in their individual studies, found an association between authoritarian parenting and suicidality. Furthermore, Polanco-Roman et al. (2016), Okechukwu et al. (2022), Windarwati et al. (2022) found a relationship between stress and suicidal ideation. While, Han et al. (2022), Stark et al. (2022), Sadeghi et al. (2023) found a negative association between suicidal ideation and resilience.

Hypotheses

- 1. Authoritarian parenting style would positively and significantly predict suicidal ideation among university undergraduates.
- 2. Stress symptoms would positively and significantly predict suicidal ideation among university undergraduates.
- 3. Resilience would moderate the relationship between authoritarian parenting style and suicidal ideation among university undergraduates.

4. Resilience would moderate the relationship between stress symptoms and suicidal ideations among university undergraduates.

Method

Participants

The participants for this study were 200 undergraduates drawn from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. Their age ranged from 18 to 25 years with mean age of 22.50 and standard deviation of 3.50. Among the 200 participants, 50 were from Law; 50 were from Political Science department; 50 were from Accountancy department; while 50 were from English department. Among the participants, 12 were married whereas 188 were single. 189 among them were Christians while 9 were Muslims. The other 2 participants did not disclose their religious affiliation.

Instruments

Four instruments were used in this study for data collection; they include: Authoritarian sub-scale of Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) by Buri (1991), Stress Sub-Scale of Depression Anxiety and Stress (DASS) by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995), Scale for Suicidal Ideation by Beck et al. (1979) and Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) by Smith et al. (2008).

Suicidal Ideation

Suicidal ideation scale was developed by Beck et al. (1979). It is a 19-items questionnaire which measures suicidal ideation and has been discovered to be appropriate for nonclinical population. Each item comprises of three choices reviewed by self-destructive thinking on a 3-point scale ranging from 0 to 2. The authors of BSS propose that the scale is best used to distinguish and measure the severity of self-destructive ideation, which is thought to be a sign of suicide hazard. The scale depends on five measurements via the intensity of self-destructive ideation, active self-destructive desire, suicide arranging, passive suicide desire, and covering. Beck et al. (1979) reported that the internal consistency (Cronbach coefficient alpha) of the SSI as 0.89 for 90 inpatient suicide ideators, and its interjudge reliability was 0.83. Moreover Tobih et al. (2024) reported a reliability alpha coefficient of .81for the scale.

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), developed by Baumrind (1991). Was developed to measure parenting principle styles which are perceived by children as approaches their parents uses in taking care of them. The instrument consists of 30 items with three sub-dimensions that include: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative. It is scored using a four point likert scale which ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). According to Aroyewum et al., (2023) The Cronbach alpha value for each of the dimensions for Nigerian samples are, authoritative (0.71) authoritarian (0.70), permissive (0.79); the value for the total score however was 0.90. Tobih et al. (2024) reported the reliability alpha coefficient of .72 for authoritative, .76 for authoritarian, .75 for permissive and .87 for the total value. Nonetheless, this study focuses on 10-items authoritarian subscale of this questionnaire.

Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS)

Stress was measured in this study, using the stress sub-scale of DASS which consist of 7 items that measures an individual's stress symptoms level, using a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 0= did not apply to me at all to 3=Applied to me most of the time. Sample item for the stress sub-scale included: I just couldn't seem to get going. The authors reported the convergent validity of DASS anxiety with Beck's anxiety inventory (BAI), with high correlation of r=.81 and DASS depression inventory with BDI as r=74. Laranjera et al. (2023) reported the Cronbach's alphas for the depression, anxiety and stress subscales and the full scale as .83, .76, .82 and .90, respectively.

Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)

The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) was developed by Smith et al. (2008) and it contains 6 items. BRS utilizes a 5-point Likert scale response pattern, ranging from (1), strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Sample items for BRS include: I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times (positively worded) and I have a hard time making it through stressful events (negatively worded and scored in reverse). The developers reported the internal consistency of BRS, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranging from .80 to .91. Uzor et al. (2022) also reported a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .87 for BRS

Procedure

The researchers randomly selected 4 faculties from the 14 faculties in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka; they include: Social Sciences, Law, Education, and Management Sciences. The researchers obtained a letter of introduction from the Head of Department of Psychology of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka for a formal introduction of the researchers to the 4 Departments selected using purposive simpling. After the researchers have gotten the introduction letter from the H.O.D of Psychology Department, the researcher went to each of the Departments for a formal introduction before going to the undergraduate students for data collection. Purposive sampling method which was based on the inclusion criteria was used in selecting 55 undergraduate students from each of the four selected departments that were administered the copies of the questionnaires with both oral and written instructions on how they may fill the items in the questionnaire; they were also assured of confidentiality of their responses. From the 220 administered copies of the questionnaires, 200 properly filled copies (50 from each department were selected) and coded for analysis.

Inclusion criteria

To be included in the study, the following criteria must be met:

The participant must be admitted as a student in any of the 4 selected departments as stated in participants section, and must be willing to participate in the study.

Design and Statistics

This study utilized a correlational design and moderated regression statistic was adopted as the statistical tool for data analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 to determine the predictive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and stress on suicidal ideation as well as the moderating role of resilience among university undergraduates.

Result

Result in table 1 above indicated that authoritarian parenting style predicted suicidal ideation at (β = 2.76, t = 5.50, p <.001). Thus, the first hypothesis was accepted. This observation showed that for every additional unit in authoritarian style, suicidal ideation rises by 2.76 units. The result from table one also indicated that stress predicted suicidal ideation at (β = 2.64, t = 5.96, p <.001). Hence, the second hypothesis of the study was also accepted. This finding implies that for every additional unit of stress, suicidal ideation increases by 2.64 units. It was as well discovered from table one that there was a negative significant interaction between authoritarian parenting and resilience, on suicidal ideation at (β = -3.7, t = -4.35, p <.001) indicating that resilience moderated the predictive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and suicidal ideation. Furthermore, table one indicated that there was a negative significant interaction between stress and resilience on suicidal ideation at (β = -1.96, t = -2.52, p <.05). Thus, resilience moderated the relationship between stress and suicidal ideation.

Table 1: Moderated regression for the role of resilience on authoritarian parenting and stress on suicidal ideation

Variable	R ²	Df1(df2)	F	β	SE	T	LLCI	ULCI
Model1 A*R	.1780	3(196)	14.1					
Model 2 S*R	.3066	3(196)	28.9					
Authoritarian				2.76	.1376	5.501	.0284	1.6857
Stress				2.64	.1074	5.962	.0525	1.5288
A*C				-3.71	.0375	-4.345	-7210	-3.2371
B*C				-1.96	.0305	-2.520	0167	-1.5172

The findings in this study have a significant outcome, indicating that the hypothesis of the study were accepted. The first hypothesis was accepted, indicating that authoritarian parenting style predicted suicidal ideation. By implication, this finding shows that as authoritarian parenting style increases, suicidal ideation, increases. This finding is in line with the finding Tobih et al. (2024) that examined parenting styles and hostility as predictors of suicidal ideation among university undergraduates and found that authoritarian parenting style predicted suicidal ideation.

Nunes and Mota (2023) investigated parenting styles and suicidal ideation of adolescents: The moderating role of social skills among Latin-Americans. Their finding showed that there is a correlation between authoritarian parenting style and suicidal ideation among adolescence.

Furthermore, Arafat et al. (2022) examined parenting styles and suicidal behavior: A focused review. Their result also showed that there is a relationship between authoritarian parenting style and suicidal ideation among adolescence.

The second hypothesis of the study was also accepted which indicated that stress predicted suicidal ideation among university undergraduates. Thus, an increases in an undergraduates stress, leads to an increases in suicidal ideation. This finding is in consonance with the finding of Windarwati et al. (2022). They investigated the relationship between stress, anxiety, and depression on suicidal ideation in adolescents. From their findings, it was observed that stress, anxiety, and depression have a significant effect on suicide ideation among adolescents.

Furthermore, Okechukwu et al (2022) investigated academic stress and suicidal ideation: The moderating roles of coping style and resilience. They found that suicidal ideation is heightened by increased academic stress.

The third hypothesis of this study was accepted which showed that resilience moderated the relationship between authoritarian parenting style and suicidal ideation. This finding is in line with the finding of Sadeghi et al. (2023). They investigated resilience and suicidal thoughts in young people: based on the Rfsanjan youth cohort study. Their finding showed

an inverse and significant relationship between resilience and suicidal thoughts in both men and women. By implication, as resilience increases, suicidal thought decreases.

Han et al. (2022) examined resilience to suicidal behavior in young adults: a cross-sectional study and found that teaching young adults the qualities as well as attributes of resilience which include self-efficacy, cognitive flexibility as well as expression of one's positive affect are among the factors that decreases the tendency of suicidal behaviour among young adults with suicidal ideation.

Stark et al. (2022) examined the correlation between suicidal ideation and resilience among native- and foreign-born adolescents in the United States. Their finding indicated that suicidal ideation and resilience were negatively correlated.

The fourth hypothesis of the study was as well accepted, which showed that resilience moderated the relationship between stress and suicidal ideation. The finding in this present study is in line with the finding of Okechukwu et al (2022) that examined academic stress and suicidal ideation: The moderating roles of coping style and resilience. They found that increased academic stress increases suicidal ideation. However, they also observed that resilience moderated the likelihood of academic stress leading to suicidal ideation. Thus, implied that a student's high level of resilience would help in circumventing or role with academic stress that have tendency of stimulating suicidal ideation without experiencing any pathological emotions that could trigger suicidal ideation. While a student with a very little resilience, when exposed to academic stressors, could develop suicidality.

Implication of the Study

Theoretically, the outcome of this study validated the theoretical framework of this study by observing an association between parental style (authoritarian) and suicidal ideation, as well as an association between stress and suicidal ideation. It was further observed that an undergraduate's high level of resilience would inhibit such individual from experiencing the potential of authoritarian parenting style and stress, in stimulating suicidal ideation in the individual.

Furthermore, since resilience was found to moderate such predictive relationship between authoritarian parenting, and stress on suicidal ideation among university undergraduates, the observation will guard school psychologists, counsellors, as well as other mental health professionals on psychological factor (resilience) that they needed to inculcate or enhance in undergraduates, while dealing with suicidal ideation, resulting from stress, or as a result of the impact of authoritarian parenting approach.

Limitations of the Study

This study utilized correlational design in conducting the study. Thus, lacking the strength to establish a causational implication. Hence the need for the utilization of other research approach that can have cause-effect implication. Furthermore, the study relied on self-report mode of data collection (questionnaires). Hence, participants' responses could be prone to exaggeration as well as social desirability. Thus, could impact the research outcome.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1. There is need for advocacy on the impact of parenting style on shaping the children's personality as well as behaviour.
- 2. University undergraduates' should be properly oriented on the possible stressors that they should expect to see in their journey of student hood, so as not to be taken unaware (preparedness).
- 3. Since resilience moderated the predictive relationship between authoritarian parenting style and stress on suicidal ideation, school psychologist and counsellors working in the universities should focus on enhancing the resilience of undergraduates', when dealing with suicidal ideation stimulated by authoritarian parenting as well as stress; so as to reduce suicidal ideation among undergraduates as well as to prevent those with suicidal ideation from attempting or committing suicide.

Suggestion for Future Studies

Research findings often open up avenues for further research as the answer to a problem often sometimes begets another problem. In this regard, the following is suggested in this study:

- 1. Future studies, aimed at investigating these study variables (authoritarian parenting style and stress on suicidal ideation) should use design that supports causal inferences.
- 2. Future studies on this title should also investigate how demographic variables could influence the outcome of this study.

Conclusion

This study investigated authoritarian parenting style and stress as predictors of suicidal ideation, and further examined the moderating role of resilience on such relationship among undergraduates. From the findings, it can be said that ones' upbringing impact their behaviour and can put them at risk of suicide. Furthermore, the finding in this study implies that stress of undergraduates' is among the factors that causes suicidal ideation. However, all hope is not lost as the outcome of this study also observed a way out. It was further observed that the enhancement of resilience among undergraduates will inhibit the negative impact of authoritarian parenting and stress from stimulating suicidal ideation among undergraduates.

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