

Understanding The Association Between Social Desirability, Trait-Seriousness, and Trait-Cheerfulness in Indian Mothers

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Abstract

This quantitative study explores the positive psychological traits exhibited by Indian mothers and their implications for holistic parenting. The study intends to explore the influence of social desirability (SD) on trait-cheerfulness (TCH) has the potential to inform interventions and programs that promote positive parenting practices. Data were collected from 32 participants using a questionnaire with items from State-Trait-Cheerfulness-Inventory-T-60 (STCI-T-60) and The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale-Short Form to measure TCH, trait-seriousness (SE), bad-mood (BD) and SD, respectively. The scores were converted to numerical values, SD = 88.46%, TCH = 86.25%, TSE = 80%, BM = 58.75%, for correlation analysis. The results suggest a positive relationship between SD and cheerfulness, emphasizing the importance of managing negative emotions and striking a balance between responsibility and playfulness in raising children. This research highlights the significance of supporting Indian mothers in managing negative emotions, fostering positive emotional climates, and maintaining a balance between responsibility and playfulness. By integrating these findings into parenting interventions, professionals can promote the overall well-being of Indian mothers and their children, creating a positive and nurturing environment for healthy development.

Keywords: positive psychology, positive parenting, trait-cheerfulness, trait-seriousness, societal desirability, Indian mothers

Introduction

Indian mothers hold immense significance in shaping parenting practices based on their cultural background. These mothers play a central role in their children's lives, embodying cultural values and traditions that are deeply rooted in Indian society. Recognized as the primary caregivers and nurturers, Indian mothers are responsible for the well-being and overall development of their children. Motherhood is regarded as a sacred and revered role in Indian society, with mothers expected to prioritize their children's needs above their own. They provide their children with unconditional love, care, and guidance, forming strong emotional bonds that foster a sense of security and belonging. Indian mothers are known for their selflessness and willingness to make sacrifices for their children. They are seen as embodiments of compassion, patience, and wisdom, and their guidance is sought after in important life decisions.

Cultural practices and traditions exert a profound influence on the multifaceted role of Indian mothers. Entrusted with the sacred duty of transmitting cultural and religious beliefs, these mothers impart a profound sense of identity, heritage, and values to their offspring. Simultaneously, they assume a vital role in prioritizing education and actively supporting their children's academic pursuits. Furthermore, Indian mothers assume the responsibility of instilling moral virtues, fostering discipline, and nurturing social skills, with an emphasis on empathy, compassion, and the cultivation of harmonious relationships. Despite regional and socioeconomic differentiations, the intrinsic values and significance associated with Indian motherhood persist as influential forces within the fabric of Indian society. In the face of modernization and globalization, these mothers gracefully navigate the evolving landscape, skillfully balancing work and family commitments. Nevertheless, the profound influence of Indian motherhood endures, shaping parenting practices and perpetuating the rich cultural heritage of the nation. The perception that Indian mothers require more support than Indian fathers in parenting is rooted in societal and cultural norms prevalent in India. However, Indian society is gradually evolving, recognizing the significance of fatherhood. Many fathers are actively seeking a more prominent parenting role.

Trait cheerfulness, falling within positive psychology, refers to an enduring inclination toward positive emotions, optimism, and a cheerful demeanor. Its impact on parenting has been explored, revealing associations with positive parenting behaviors and outcomes. Maternal cheerfulness positively influences children's social competence, emotional well-being, and academic achievement by fostering a positive social environment, emotional climate, and supportive learning environment. Research conducted in India indicates that Indian mothers exhibit a relatively high social desirability (SD) bias. This phenomenon is influenced by cultural norms and expectations, leading individuals, including mothers, to present themselves in a favorable light. Studies have shown that Indian adults display SD bias, suggesting that Indian mothers may also be influenced by concerns about SD when reporting their attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs related to parenting. The prevalence of SD bias among Indian mothers can impact their self-reported positive parenting practices, as they may overestimate their behaviors due to societal expectations.

Understanding the scores of SD, trait-seriousness (SE), and trait cheerfulness (TCH) among Indian mothers in the context of positive psychology concepts can provide valuable insights to enhance their parenting abilities. Awareness of SD bias can help mothers align their actions with their authentic parenting style, while a higher TCH score can infuse positivity and enthusiasm into their parenting approach. These scores empower mothers to become aware of their strengths, areas for growth, and individual tendencies as parents, promoting well-being and authentic connections with their children.

Literature Review

Positive psychology and well-being are integral components of child development. Gülay Temiz, (1985) conducted two studies investigating the relationship between maternal psychological well-being and parenting attitudes, as well as the challenges faced by mothers during the postpartum period. These studies underscored the importance of maternal psychological well-being and its impact on parenting attitudes and adaptation to motherhood. Mazumdar et al., (2021), explored the associations among psychological well-being, self-compassion, psychological inflexibility, and parenting stress among urban Indian mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings revealed that self-compassion, lower parenting stress, and greater psychological flexibility were associated with higher levels of psychological well-being. Lau, et al. (2020) examined the multidimensional factor structure of cheerfulness and its associations with personality dimensions, humor styles, and well-being. The study found that cheerfulness and seriousness positively

correlated with life satisfaction and emotional well-being, while negative mood exhibited a curvilinear association with emotional well-being (Gülay Temiz, 2020). These studies highlight the importance of promoting positive emotions, self-compassion, and psychological flexibility to enhance maternal well-being and subsequently foster child well-being.

Screening maternal mental health, especially personality disorders and mental illnesses, has been recommended to raise special concerns in child welfare cases. Bradshaw et al., (2011) found that overall satisfaction with children was high, but specific domains related to discipline were associated with increased child abuse potential. However, the associations between parental satisfaction and child abuse potential may be moderated by SD (Bradshaw et al., 2011). SD response bias has been identified as an important consideration in self-report research, including studies on parenting and child outcomes (Barger, 2002; Shaffer & Brody, 1981).

Emotional competence and social competence have been investigated as important factors in child development. Their study conducted a connection between maternal behavior such as expression of emotions, responses to children's emotional expressions, and the overall emotional atmosphere, and the development of emotional skills in preschool-aged children (Denham & Grout, 1993). Emotional expression was emphasized as an important aspect in the development of social competence (Denham & Grout, 1993). Additionally, trait emotional intelligence (EI) is a significant predictor of socioemotional competence in school-aged children, surpassing the influence of IQ (Frederickson et al., 2012).

The cultural and environmental factors influencing parenting attitudes have been examined, emphasizing the importance of considering different cultural contexts in understanding parenting practices. In their 2002 study, Jambunathan & Counselman, (2002) conducted a comparison of parenting attitudes between Asian Indian mothers residing in the United States and those living in India. Mazumdar et al., (2022) examined the relationships between psychological well-being, self-compassion, psychological inflexibility, and parenting stress among urban Indian mothers amidst the pandemic. The researchers highlighted the significance of self-compassion and psychological flexibility in fostering well-being.

Cheerfulness and parenting have been examined in several studies, shedding light on the associations between parental cheerfulness and child outcomes. López-Benítez et al., (2018) found that individuals with high trait cheerfulness showed greater changes in state cheerfulness in response to affective stimuli. This suggests that parental cheerfulness may contribute to a positive emotional atmosphere within the family, potentially influencing the child's well-being. However, further research is needed to understand the specific mechanisms and long-term effects of parental cheerfulness on child development. SD bias is an important consideration in studies on parenting and child outcomes. Barger, (2002) conducted a study evaluating the adequacy of different short forms of the Marlowe-Crowne SD scale in assessing and controlling for response bias. The study revealed inconsistencies in model adequacy across samples and discouraged the use of the Marlowe-Crowne scale and its short forms as a control for response bias.

Gülay Temiz, (2020) highlighted the impact of maternal psychological well-being on parental attitudes and adaptation to motherhood. Lee et al., (2016) found that greater self-compassion, less parenting stress, and greater psychological flexibility were associated with higher levels of psychological well-being in urban Indian mothers. Supporting parental well-being is essential for promoting effective parenting practices and positive child outcomes. López-Benítez et al., (2018) and Mazumdar et al., (2023) found that greater self-compassion, less parenting stress, and greater psychological flexibility were associated with higher levels of psychological well-being in urban Indian mothers. These findings underscore the

importance of promoting maternal psychological well-being through interventions and policies. Strength-based interventions have the potential to enhance maternal well-being. They can focus on cultivating positive traits, building resilience, and fostering supportive relationships. By capitalizing on strengths, these interventions may help mothers navigate challenges and promote their well-being (Mazumdar et al., 2021; Gülay Temiz, 2020).

The reviewed literature underscores the importance of strength-based interventions in promoting maternal well-being. Addressing social desirability bias, screening maternal mental health, fostering positive parent-child relationships, promoting psychological well-being, and considering cultural factors are crucial in supporting mothers. Future research should further explore the efficacy of strength-based interventions and their long-term effects on maternal well-being and child outcomes. These findings have implications for interventions, policies, and programs aimed at supporting mothers and fostering positive parenting practices. The findings emphasize the significance of considering social desirability bias, screening maternal mental health, promoting positive parenting practices, accounting for cultural contexts, and supporting maternal psychological well-being. This knowledge has vital implications for the development of targeted interventions and policies aimed at improving child well-being and promoting optimal parenting practices. Future research should continue to explore these domains, considering the child's perspective, cultural factors, and the dynamic nature of the parent-child relationship, to further enhance our understanding and effectively support families in promoting positive child outcomes.

Methodology

The research design for this study is a cross-sectional correlational design. A sample of 32 Indian mothers with children between the ages of 1 and 17 years old were selected. This sampling approach helped in obtaining a sample that reflected the target population of interest. Data were collected from the 32 participants using a questionnaire with items from State-Trait-Cheerfulness-Inventory-T-60 (STCI-T-60) and The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale-Short Form (Barger, S. D. 2002) to measure TCH, SE, BD, and SD, respectively. These existing validated questionnaires have demonstrated reliability and validity in previous research. Participants were asked to respond based on their perceptions and experiences. In addition to these measures, demographic information of the participants was also gathered to provide context to the findings.

The cross-sectional correlational allows for the examination of associations between variables TCH, SE, BM, and SD in Indian mothers having children below the age of 17 at the time of collecting data, i.e., by the end of June 2023. A sample of 32 mothers enabled the researchers to analyze the connections between these variables and the potential influences of these characteristics on parenting. The sample included mothers who were literate and had sufficient family income. Standardized questionnaires were utilized to assess TCH, SE, BM, and SD. Each individual's scores for TCH, TSE, BD, and SD were calculated and converted to percentages to calculate the correlation coefficient. Correlation analysis is done to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables. Through regression analysis, the predictive power of SE and SD on TCH was calculated. These statistical analyses provided insights into the associations and potential influences between the variables under investigation.

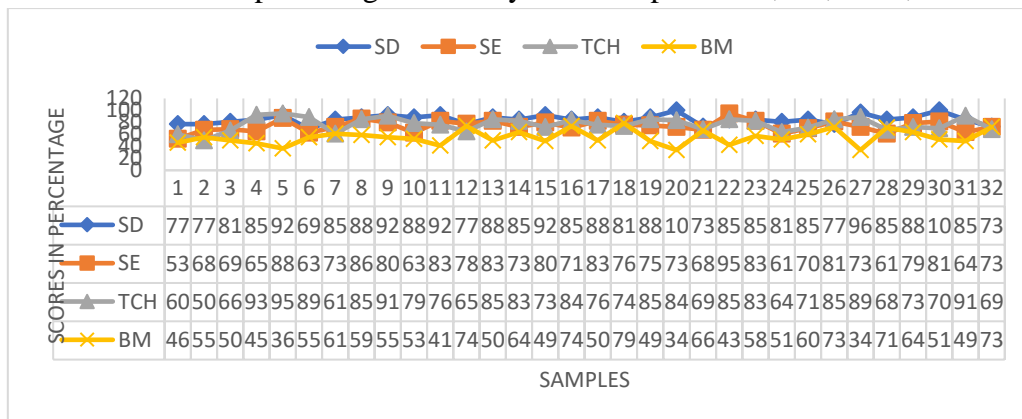
Data Analysis

The scores for the variables were converted to numerical values, SD = 88.46%, TCH = 86.25%, TSE = 80%, BM = 58.75%, for correlation analysis. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the

relationships between these variables. The results revealed several correlations that provide insights into the associations between the variables of interest. First, there was a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.416$) between SD and SE. This suggests that individuals who tend to display more socially desirable behaviors are also more likely to exhibit seriousness in their traits. Similarly, a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.354$) was found between SD and TCH, indicating that individuals who engage in socially desirable behaviors tend to display higher levels of cheerfulness in their traits. On the other hand, a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.561$) was observed between SD and BM. This finding implies that individuals who exhibit more socially desirable behaviors are less likely to experience or express BMs. Furthermore, a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.094$) was identified between SE and BM. This suggests that individuals with a higher level of seriousness in their traits are slightly less likely to experience or exhibit BMs.

In addition to the correlation analysis, a regression analysis was performed to examine the relationship between the dependent variable (TCH) and the independent variables (SE and SD). The regression analysis provided important insights into the impact of SE on TCH. The regression coefficients revealed that the intercept coefficient was 46.07135004, representing the estimated average TCH value when the SE is zero. However, it is important to note that this interpretation may not be meaningful since SE cannot be zero in this context. The coefficient for SE was found to be 0.41996482. This means that for every one-unit increase in SE, the TCH is estimated to increase by approximately 0.420 units, assuming all other variables remain constant. The statistical significance of this relationship was determined through the p-value associated with the SE coefficient, which was found to be 0.04784903. Since this value is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, it indicates a statistically significant relationship between SE and TCH. In other words, SE has a significant impact on the TCH variable. The R-squared value was found to be 0.124252513, indicating that approximately 12.43% of the variability in TCH can be explained by the linear relationship with SE. The remaining 87.57% of the variability is attributed to other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R-squared value, which takes into account the number of predictors and the sample size, was 0.09506093, slightly lower than the R-squared value. This suggests that the inclusion of the SE variable did not significantly improve the model's explanatory power. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) table provided additional information about the overall fit of the regression model. The F-statistic was 4.256449994, and the corresponding p-value was 0.04784903. These values indicate that the regression model as a whole is statistically significant, suggesting that it is a better fit than an intercept-only model.

Table 1 Scores in percentage scored by each sample in SD, SE, TCH, and BM



Result and Discussion

The correlation analysis revealed moderate positive associations between SD and SE, as well as between SD and TCH. Additionally, there were moderate negative correlations between SD and BM, and a weak negative correlation between SE and BM. The regression analysis showed that SD (SD) had a statistically significant positive impact on TCH, with a coefficient of 0.420, suggesting that for each one-unit increase in SD, TCH increased by approximately 0.420 units. However, the model had limited explanatory power, as indicated by a relatively low R-squared value. Further analysis is needed to understand the determinants of TCH, taking into account additional factors.

The research work holds practical implications for understanding the psychological well-being and parent-child dynamics among Indian mothers. The findings could contribute to the development of interventions and programs aimed at promoting positive parenting practices and enhancing the parent-child relationship. The research outcomes may also inform mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers in designing targeted strategies to support Indian mothers in their parenting journey. The research delved into an exploration of the positive-psychology traits displayed by Indian mothers and their potential implications for holistic parenting. The study investigated the variables SD, SE, and their impact on the trait of cheerfulness. Theoretical implications arising from this research paper encompass various key areas.

This study highlights the importance of considering the cultural context in understanding positive-psychology traits and parenting practices among Indian mothers. By examining sociocultural influences, the research unveils the impact of cultural contexts on parenting styles and outcomes. It explores the relationship between positive-psychology traits and holistic parenting, providing insights into effective parenting strategies. The study identifies specific positive traits of significance within the Indian cultural context, guiding the cultivation of these traits for optimal parenting outcomes. The research also examines social desirability bias, shedding light on its influence on self-reported positive traits such as cheerfulness and seriousness. Recognizing the impact of social desirability bias is crucial for the accurate interpretation of research findings and the design of interventions that encourage genuine responses. The study also explores the interplay between self-esteem and trait cheerfulness in positive traits, deepening our understanding of their contributions to well-being and parenting behaviors. The focus on Indian mothers allows for cross-cultural comparisons, identifying commonalities and differences in positive traits and parenting practices across cultures. This broader perspective enhances our understanding of positive parenting and informs the development of culturally sensitive interventions.

Limitations

Cultural factors pose potential obstacles to research, as cultural norms and stigmas surrounding mental health and parenting can influence mothers' willingness to participate and disclose personal information. These cultural influences may impact the accuracy and reliability of self-report measures used in the study. Social desirability bias is a significant concern, as participants may provide socially acceptable responses rather than genuine reflections of their thoughts and behaviors. This bias can affect the validity of data, particularly when assessing sensitive topics in parenting. The tendency to present oneself favorably may influence the accuracy and reliability of reported positive traits and parenting practices. Moreover, reliance on self-report measures introduces limitations, as participants may respond based on perceived expectations or provide consistent but superficial answers, potentially compromising the accuracy and depth of the collected data.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the significance of cultural context in understanding the traits of parents, explores the influence of SD and SE on cheerfulness as positive traits, and highlights the potential for cross-cultural comparisons. These implications contribute to advancing knowledge in the fields of positive psychology, parenting, and cultural psychology, while also informing practical applications aimed at promoting holistic parenting. It contributes to the understanding of positive psychological factors that influenced parenting behaviors and outcomes and provides valuable insights into how trait cheerfulness and SD could be related to positive parenting practices in the Indian cultural context. These insights can be utilized for interventions and programs aimed at fostering positive parent-child relationships. The research sheds light on the dynamic interplay between individual traits and cultural influences, underscoring the significance of considering cultural diversity in the realm of positive psychology. Ultimately, this study has the potential to enrich our knowledge of positive parenting practices and make meaningful contributions to the well-being and positive development of both mothers and children.

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