

IS THE WORLD BETTER WITH NO PARENTS? PARENTING STYLES INFLUENCE ON COLLEGE STUDENTS COPING SKILLS DURING COVID-19



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Introduction

- Many students seeking higher education had to juggle school, friends, family, and finances daily during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Harvard Medical School conducted a study that found three out of four of 67,000 students experienced at least one stressful life event within that year that negatively impacted them (Younghans, 2018).
- Many students experienced higher levels of stress due to the uncertainty brought about by the pandemic.
- Increased family stressors during the pandemic can lead to harmful parenting practices affecting college students' coping (Hails et al., 2021).
- This study aimed to see if parenting styles buffered the effect of COVID-19 exposure on emerging adults' coping styles.

Methods

- A study of 1033 undergraduates (77.2% female, 74.4% white, and 26.8% freshmen) examined the potential effects that chronic illness has on college students' adjustment, psychological, and academic outcomes.
- Participants between the ages of 18-24 ($M = 19.61$, $SD = 1.35$) were recruited through Introduction to Psychology courses and completed the study through a Qualtrics survey.
- Participants completed the *COVID-19 Exposure and Family Impact Scale* to measure participant's exposure to COVID-19 and related COVID-19 events.
- Participants completed *The About My Mother Questionnaire* to assess the participant's perception of their caregiver's parenting behavior.
- Participants completed *The Brief COPE* to assess the use of different coping strategies.

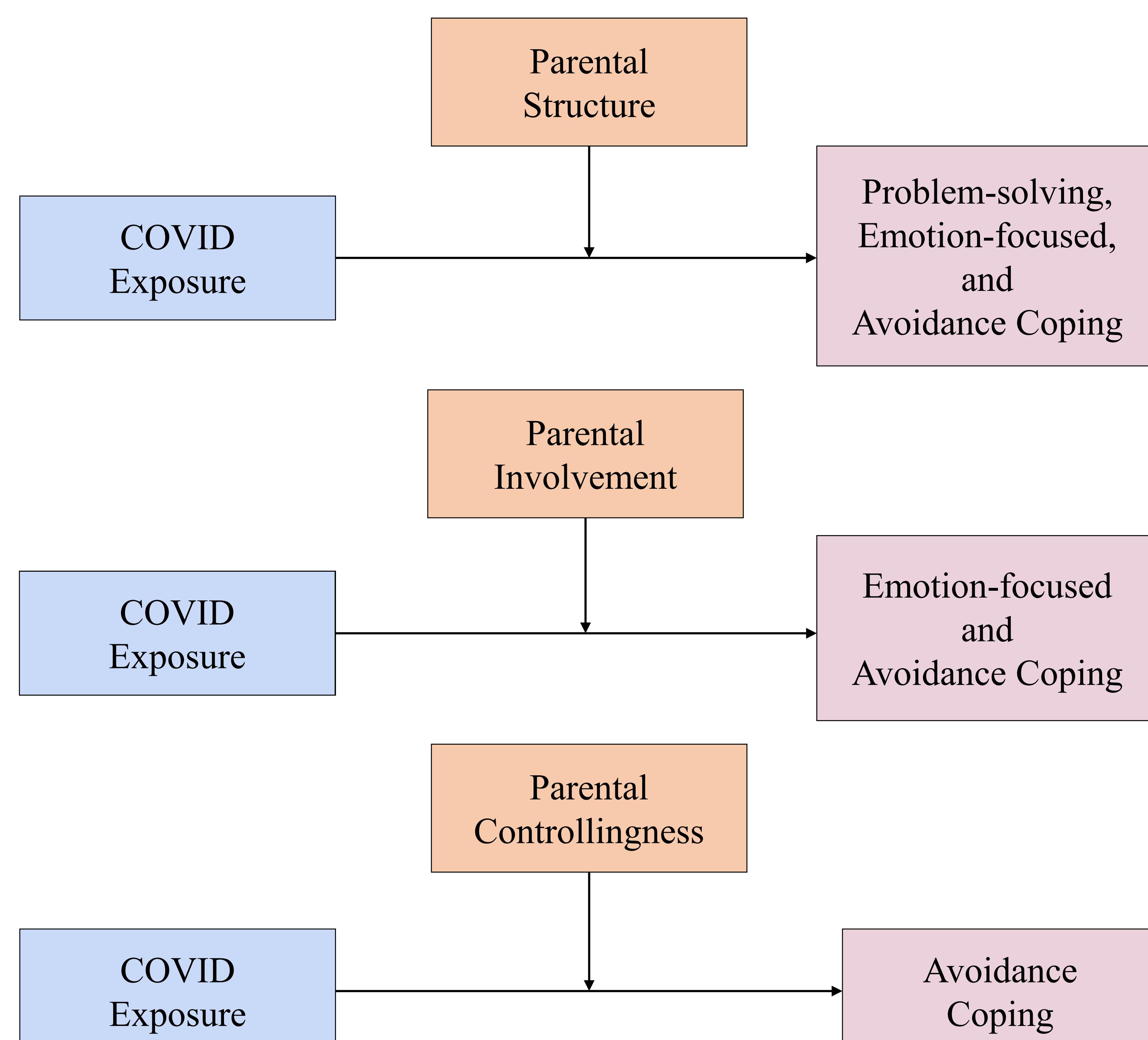
Results

Overall, greater COVID exposure was related to higher problem-solving, emotional, and avoidance coping; COVID Impact and Distress was related to greater emotional and avoidance coping (see Table 1).

	Problem-Solving Coping	Emotional Coping	Avoidance Coping
COVID Exposure	.09**	.15***	.16***
COVID Impact	-.04	.23***	.33***
COVID Distress	.06	.21***	.33***

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Using PROCESS, parenting styles did moderate the relationship between COVID exposure and emerging adults' coping styles. Specifically, higher parenting structure was related to higher levels of problem-solving, emotion-focused, and avoidance coping at higher COVID exposure ($B = .003\text{-.005}$; all $p = .0001$). Higher parenting involvement was related to higher emotion-focused coping ($B = .002$; $p = .002$) with higher COVID exposure; and low controllingness was related to lower avoidance, but only at low levels of COVID exposure ($B = .001$; $p = .005$).



Discussion

- The study aimed to investigate whether parenting styles buffered the impact of COVID-19 exposure on emerging adults' coping styles.
- Previous research shows that parenting styles plays a significant role in children's coping mechanisms. More specifically, parents with warm and nurturing parenting styles help emerging adults regulate their negative emotions positively by giving them the skills to manage difficult situations and practice emotion-focused coping (Restubog et al., 2020).
- Our study shows that those raised under a structured parenting dynamic had a wider range of coping strategies. This range during the pandemic is arguably the most beneficial due to the increase in problem-solving skills. Structured parenting facilitates problem solving in comparison to the warm and nurturing parenting style.
- Parental controllingness led to avoidance coping which isn't deemed to be the most productive coping strategy. Past research indicates that parental controllingness expedites poor coping skills in certain or, in our case uncertain times.
- Understanding the dynamics of parental styles and their influence on emerging adults' behavior and coping mechanisms can assist in informing strategies to enhance resiliency and promote adaptive coping skills.

For More Information:

