

# A study on perception about parenting among rural children

■ S.C. HUNSHAL, S.S. PATIL AND P.G. HOLEYANNAVAR

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See end of the paper for authors' affiliations →

**S.C. HUNSHAL**  
AICRP on Child Development,  
Department of Human  
Development and Family Studies,  
Rural Home Science College,  
University of Agricultural  
Sciences, DHARWAD  
(KARNATAKA) INDIA  
Email : hunshal2@gmail.com

■ **ABSTRACT :** The present study was carried out with the objectives to study the children's perception about their parents' parenting and factors influencing their perception in the year 2012-13. The sample comprised 206 High School children in the age group of 12-15 years, studying in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> standards in government High Schools from 3 villages of Dharwad taluk. Children's perception about parenting was assessed using Bharadwaj *et al.* (1998) scale. The results revealed that majority of the children had positive perception towards their parents' parenting. This indicated that parents tend to be accepting, protecting, indulgent, realistic, moralistic and disciplining their children. Further, socio-demographic factors such as age, ordinal position, family size, educational level of the father and socio-economic status of the family had significant influence on children's perception about parenting.

■ **KEY WORDS:** Parenting, Children's perception, Parental attitude, Parenting style

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**F**amily is an important unit of society which has great importance in social life. A family is the first school in which a child receives the basic values of life and it constitutes our parents, grandparents and children. It provides children with a sense of belongingness and a unique identity. The survival of society depends upon the continued existence and functioning of the family and parents play an important role in it. Now-a-days, their role in upbringing children is very important and challenging issue. Parenting is generally considered as a single minded, unconditional desire to provide a loving and caring home. Relationship between the parents and children happens to be the central factor in the personal as well as social upliftment of the individual. Children's perception of parental attitude towards them has a great

impact on the dynamics of their behaviour.

The two distinctive roles of parents include mothering and fathering. The role of mother is largely associated with congenial development of personality as the child first comes in contact with mother and always depends on her to satisfy his basic needs. The role of father stands as a bridge by which the child comes in contact with the outside world (Meerto, 1968). So, 'fathering' is an important feature of socialization and 'mothering' symbolizes emotional support, interpersonal sensitivity and help (Farren and Ramsay, 1977). Since, decades, many studies (Vijaylaxmi and Kadapatti, 2012; Chatterjee and Adhikari, 2013; Chowdhury and Ghose, 2014) have been conducted on parenting styles whereas, very few studies about perception regarding parenting as most of the

children have no clear cut concept of their 'mother' and 'father'. Therefore, it is important to study the children's perception regarding fathering and mothering separately as well as whole on different dichotomous models of parenting. Hence, the present study was undertaken with the objectives to assess the children's perception about their parents' parenting and to understand the influence of socio-demographic factors that influence children's perception about parenting.

## ■ RESEARCH METHODS

The sample for the study comprised 206 adolescents (boys-111 and girls- 95) in the age range of 12-14 years who were studying in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> standards. They were selected from three villages of Dharwad taluk namely Kotur (n=54), Nigadi (n=57) and Mummigatti (n=95).

A self structured questionnaire consisted of statements which helped to collect information of children such as age, gender, ordinal position, family type, size and composition of the family. Kuppaswamy's scale (2009) to assess socio-economic status of the family which elicited information regarding educational and occupational level of parents and income of the family was used.

The perception of children about parenting was assessed with help of parenting scale developed by Indian author Bharadwaj *et al.* (1998). The scale consisted of eight parenting models *viz.*, rejection vs acceptance, carelessness vs protection, neglect vs indulgence, utopian expectation vs realism, lenient standards vs moralism, freedom vs discipline and faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation.

Each model of parenting has five items with five alternative answers describing particular behaviour of the parent. The answer for each statement by the child is to be responded separately for mother and father which express their relation with them up to 15 statements. Each item of the scale was rated on 5 point scale with the score ranging from 1 to 5. Thus, the maximum score each respondent could obtain was 25 and minimum 5. The interpretation of scores for parenting either in relation to each model of parenting or as a whole was made with the help of norms known as 'sten' scores that refer to standard score derived from standard 10 scale. Below 5.5 sten is considered as low score which indicates rejection, carelessness, neglect, utopian expectation, lenient standards, freedom, faulty role expectation and

acceptance, protection, indulgence, realism, moralism, discipline and realistic role expectation modes of parenting.

## ■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The background information of school children is presented in Table 1. Nearly half of the children were in the age group of 12-13 years (49.5 %) and other half of them were in the age of 13-15 years (50.5%) age range, respectively. Further, more number of children (36.9%) were first born, followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> (33.0%), 3<sup>rd</sup> born and later born (29.9 %), respectively. Regarding family type, higher per cent of children were from nuclear families (64.1%) and 35.9 per cent from joint families. With respect to family size, 48.1 per cent of the children belonged to medium sized families (48.1%) followed by large (31.1%) and small (20.9%) size families, respectively. Family composition of children revealed that majority (98.5%) of them had both parents and very few (1.5%) of them had only mother.

With respect to educational level of parents the data revealed that, 36.9 per cent of fathers had education up to High School, followed by primary level (36.4 %), 25.3 per cent of them were illiterate and very few (1.5 %) of them had education up to graduate/post graduate level. In case of mother's education, similar trend was observed. But, none of the mothers had graduate/post graduate and professional level of education. Data on occupational level of fathers revealed that, 47.1 per cent were unskilled workers followed by clerical, shop-owner and farmers (28.6 %), skilled workers (20.4 %) and semi-professionals (2.4 %), respectively. Very few fathers were semi-skilled workers and unemployed. Regarding mother's occupation, 41.3 per cent of them were unemployed (house wife), followed by unskilled workers (35.0%), clerical, shop-owner and farmers (11.2%), skilled workers (10.2%), respectively. Very few mothers were semi-skilled workers and semi-professionals. With respect to income of the family, 42.7 per cent had income range of ≤ Rs. 2300/- per month followed by Rs. 2301-6850/- (39.8%), Rs. 6851-11450/- (13.1%) and Rs. 11451-17150/- (1.9%), respectively. Very few of them had income range ≥ Rs. 17150/-.

The data presented in Table 2 reveals details about children's perception about different models of parenting by their parents. It is evident from the results that with respect to overall parenting, majority (86.9 %) of

<b>Table 1 : Background information of school children</b>					<b>(n=206)</b>	
Sr. No.	Characteristics	Category	N	%		
1.	Age	12-13 years	102	49.5		
		13-15 years	104	50.5		
2.	Gender	Boys	111	53.9		
		Girls	95	46.1		
3.	Ordinal position	1 <sup>st</sup> born	76	36.9		
		2 <sup>nd</sup> born	68	33.0		
		3 <sup>rd</sup> born and later born	62	29.4		
4.	Family type	Nuclear	132	64.1		
		Joint	74	35.9		
5.	Family size	Small: < 4	43	20.9		
		Medium: 5-7	99	48.1		
		Large: > 7	64	31.1		
6.	Family composition	Both parents present	203	98.5		
		Only father	-	-		
		Only mother	3	1.5		
7.	Educational level father	Illiterate	52	25.3		
		Primary school/literate	75	36.4		
		High-school	76	36.9		
		Graduate or post graduate	3	1.5		
	Mother	Illiterate	73	35.4		
		Primary school/literate	75	36.4		
		High-school	58	28.1		
		Graduate or post graduate	-	-		
		8.	Occupational level father	Unemployed	1	0.5
				Unskilled worker	97	47.1
Semi-skilled worker	2			1.0		
Skilled worker	42			20.4		
Clerical, shop owner, farmer	59			28.6		
Semi-profession	5			2.4		
Profession	-			-		
Mother	Unemployed			85	41.3	
	Unskilled worker			72	35.0	
	Semi-skilled worker			2	1	
	Skilled worker	21	10.2			
	Clerical, shop owner, farmer	23	11.2			
	Semi-profession	3	1.5			
9.	Income	≤ Rs. 2300	88	42.7		
		Rs. 2301-6850	82	39.8		
		Rs. 6851-11450	27	13.1		
		Rs. 11451-17150	4	1.9		
		Rs. 17151-22850	3	1.5		
		Rs. 22851-45750	1	0.5		
		≥ Rs. 45751	1	0.5		

children's perception score fell under high score dimension and only 13.1 per cent of children's score fell under low dimension. This indicated that majority of children had positive perception about their parents. Similar trend was observed in case of children's perception about fathering and mothering wherein, more number of children fell under high perception score, indicating positive perception about parenting by their fathers and mothers.

With respect to different models of parenting, the results indicated that majority of the children's perception score fell under high score of parenting as a whole. This indicated that children perceived their parents as accepting (87.4 %), protecting (72.8 %), indulgent (74.8 %), realistic (87.9 %), moralistic (58.7 %) and disciplining (79.6 %), except in case of faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation wherein majority (71.4 %) of the children had negative perception *i.e.* faulty role expectation, meaning that they always feel embarrassed because of the unpredictable expectations by their parents. On the

contrary, parental acceptance implies an attitude of love for the child. The accepting parent puts the child in a position of importance in the home and develops a relationship of emotional warmth. Parental acceptance encourages children and makes itself apparent in receptive or positive attitude towards the child's idea and judgment, worthiness and capability, love and affection and admiration along with adequate attention towards them. The sense of protection in the children makes them better and more confident. It gives them strength and psychological support. Indulgence with the child to a reasonable degree is deemed as a healthy sign. It helps in developing the child's emotional response to the situation. Parental attitude of realism gives consideration to the objective realities pertaining to both the child's capabilities and outside world while setting up and expecting his level of performance. Moralistic parents inculcate a reasonable degree of moralism in the child's personality orientations wherein the children imbibe the

**Table 2 : Distribution of children based on their perception about different models of parenting by their parents (n=206)**

Sr. No.	Models of parenting	Parents	Level of perception	
			Low (1-5)	High (>5-10)
1.	Rejection vs acceptance	Fathering	74(35.9)	132(64.1)
		Mothering	105(51.0)	101(49.0)
		Parenting as a whole	26(12.6)	180(87.4)
2.	Carelessness vs protection	Fathering	24(11.7)	182(88.3)
		Mothering	32(15.5)	174(84.5)
		Parenting as a whole	56(27.2)	150(72.8)
3.	Neglect vs indulgence	Fathering	34(16.5)	172(83.5)
		Mothering	58(28.2)	148(71.8)
		Parenting as a whole	52(25.2)	154(74.8)
4.	Utopian expectation vs realism	Fathering	86(41.7)	120(48.3)
		Mothering	82(39.8)	124(60.2)
		Parenting as a whole	25(12.1)	181(87.9)
5.	Lenient standards vs moralism	Fathering	87(42.2)	119(57.8)
		Mothering	110(53.4)	96(46.6)
		Parenting as a whole	85(41.3)	121(58.7)
6.	Freedom vs discipline	Fathering	44(21.4)	162(78.6)
		Mothering	42(20.4)	164(79.6)
		Parenting as a whole	42(20.4)	164(79.6)
7.	Faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation	Fathering	144(69.9)	62(30.1)
		Mothering	143(69.4)	63(30.6)
		Parenting as a whole	147(71.4)	59(28.6)
8.	Parenting as a whole	Fathering	40(19.4)	166(80.6)
		Mothering	36(17.5)	170(82.5)
		Parenting as a whole	27(13.1)	179(86.9)

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicates percentages

duties of life, principles and conduct adhering to what is right and virtuous. Thus, moralism plays an important role in the dynamics of social relations. Parental nature of disciplining is the strong need of social orientations but severe discipline hampers the delight and liberty of the child which he wishes at every stage of life.

Further, the perception of children regarding fathering (Table 2) also indicated similar trend wherein perception score of more number of children fell under high category of perception in each parenting model *i.e.* acceptance (64.1 %), protection (88.3 %), indulgence (83.5 %), realism (48.3 %), moralism (57.8 %) and

**Table 3 : Association between gender and perception about models of parenting (n= 206)**

Sr. No.	Models of parenting	Gender	Level of perception		Chi-square value	Mean (SD)	't' value
			Low (1-5)	High (>5-10)			
1.	Rejection vs acceptance	Boys	20 (18.0)	91 (82.0)	6.356**	6.39 (0.97)	3.42**
		Girls	6 (6.3)	89 (93.7)			
2.	Carelessness vs protection	Boys	47 (42.3)	64 (57.7)	27.968**	5.58 (1.89)	5.88**
		Girls	9 (9.5)	86 (90.5)			
3.	Neglect vs indulgence	Boys	41 (36.9)	70 (63.1)	17.443**	6.14 (1.12)	6.58**
		Girls	11 (11.6)	84 (88.4)			
4.	Utopian expectation vs realism	Boys	9 (8.1)	102 (91.9)	3.662*	7.20 (1.35)	0.54 <sup>NS</sup>
		Girls	16 (16.8)	79 (83.2)			
5.	Lenient standards vs moralism	Boys	58 (52.3)	53 (47.7)	11.995**	5.45 (1.22)	3.78**
		Girls	27 (28.4)	68 (71.6)			
6.	Freedom vs discipline	Boys	30 (27.0)	81 (73.0%)	6.535**	6.06 (1.18)	5.27**
		Girls	12 (12.6)	83 (87.4)			
7.	Faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation	Boys	85 (76.6)	26 (23.4)	3.206 <sup>NS</sup>	4.85 (1.15)	1.89 <sup>NS</sup>
		Girls	62 (65.3)	33 (34.7)			
8.	Parenting as a whole	Boys	20 (18.0)	91 (82.0)	5.098*	6.27 (0.85)	7.36**
		Girls	07 (7.4)	88 (92.6)			

Note: figures in parenthesis indicates percentages; \* and \*\* indicates of significance of values at P=0.05 and P=0.01, respectively; NS=Non-significant

**Table 4 : Association between gender and perception about models of fathering (n=206)**

Sr. No.	Models of parenting	Gender	Level of perception		Chi-square value	Mean (S.D.)	't' value
			Low (1-5)	High (>5-10)			
1.	Rejection vs acceptance	Boys	45 (40.5)	66 (59.5)	2.230 <sup>NS</sup>	5.31 (1.61)	3.62**
		Girls	29 (30.5)	66 (69.5)			
2.	Carelessness vs protection	Boys	19 (17.1)	92 (82.9)	6.988**	6.31 (1.11)	5.88**
		Girls	05 (5.3)	90 (94.7)			
3.	Neglect vs indulgence	Boys	24 (21.6)	87 (78.4)	4.573*	6.11 (0.86)	5.41**
		Girls	10 (10.5)	85 (89.5)			
4.	Utopian expectation vs realism	Boys	44 (39.6)	67 (60.4)	0.440 <sup>NS</sup>	5.63 (1.35)	0.69 <sup>NS</sup>
		Girls	42 (44.2)	53 (55.8)			
5.	Lenient standards vs moralism	Boys	58 (52.3)	53 (47.7)	9.904**	5.37 (1.32)	4.08**
		Girls	29 (30.5)	66 (69.5)			
6.	Freedom vs discipline	Boys	30 (27.0)	81 (73.0)	4.603*	6.11 (1.23)	4.91**
		Girls	14 (14.7)	81 (85.3)			
7.	Faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation	Boys	80 (72.1)	31 (27.9)	0.538 <sup>NS</sup>	4.97 (1.16)	1.13 <sup>NS</sup>
		Girls	64 (67.4)	31 (32.6)			
8.	Parenting as a whole	Boys	31 (27.9)	80 (72.1)	11.14**	6.18 (1.17)	7.36**
		Girls	09 (9.5)	86(90.5)			

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicates percentages; \* and \*\* indicates of significance of values at P = 0.05 and P = 0.01, respectively; NS = Non-significant

discipline (78.6 %) except in case of faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation. The children's perception about mothering also followed the similar trend except in case of rejection vs acceptance, lenient standards vs moralism and faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation wherein, more number of children's perception score fell in low category that is negative perception. This indicated that their mothers tend to be more rejecting, lenient and faulty in role expectation as compared to their perception about their father. Rejecting attitude by mothers manifests itself in interpersonal relationships in direct ways, when the child has to face excessive criticism, invidious comparison, harsh and inconsistent punishment in his upbringing. Lenient standards of mothers make them apparent in permitting lesser restrictions from deviations from ethical and moral behaviour and an attitude showing indifference against such inhibitions to restrict freedom and individuality. Demo *et al.* (1987) and Yadav (2006) suggested that children seem to be more affected by their perceptions of parental behaviours, than by actual parental behaviours or those reported by the parents. Similarly Elias and Yee (2009) reported that majority of children perceived their parents' parenting style as authoritative wherein their parents were clear and firm in providing direction and rational in setting up rules for them.

Gender wise perception about parenting (Table 3)

revealed that in case of overall parenting scores, majority of children's perception fell under high category indicating that both boys and girls had positive perception about their parents. Further, similar trend was observed with respect to all models of parenting in case of boys and girls except faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation where in, perception score of boys and girls fell under low dimension. The Chi-square analysis showed significant association between gender and perception about different models of parenting except in case of faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation. Further significant difference in the mean values between boys and girls was observed in all parenting models except in case of utopian expectation vs realism and faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation. This indicated that girls had more favourable perception about different models of parenting compared to boys.

In case of fathering (Table 4) a similar trend was noticed wherein, perception score of majority of children was high with respect to overall parenting as well as different models of parenting which indicated that both boys and girls had positive perception about their fathers. The Chi-square analysis showed significant association between gender and perception about fathering in almost all models of parenting except rejection vs acceptance, utopian expectation vs realism and faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation. Further, a significant

Table 5 : Association between gender and perception about models of mothering							(n=206)
Sr. No.	Models of parenting	Gender	Level of perception		Chi-square value	Mean (SD)	't' value
			Low (1-5)	High (1-5)			
1.	Rejection vs acceptance	Boys	63 (56.8)	48 (43.2)	3.224 <sup>NS</sup>	5.03 (1.43)	3.00**
		Girls	42 (44.2)	53 (55.8)			
2.	Carelessness vs protection	Boys	25 (22.5)	86 (77.5)	8.959**	6.30 (1.19)	6.23**
		Girls	07 (7.4)	88 (92.6)			
3.	Neglect vs indulgence	Boys	47 (42.3)	64 (57.7)	23.949**	5.88 (1.10)	5.53**
		Girls	11 (11.6)	84 (88.4)			
4.	Utopian expectation vs realism	Boys	44 (39.6)	67 (60.4)	0.003 <sup>NS</sup>	5.72 (1.42)	0.33 <sup>NS</sup>
		Girls	38 (40.0)	57 (60.0)			
5.	Lenient standards vs moralism	Boys	75 (67.6)	36 (32.4)	19.420**	5.00 (1.14)	4.69**
		Girls	35 (36.8)	60 (63.2)			
6.	Freedom vs discipline	Boys	30 (27.0)	81 (73.0)	6.535**	5.99 (1.41)	5.06**
		Girls	12 (12.6)	83 (87.4)			
7.	Faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation	Boys	84 (75.7)	27 (24.3)	4.440*	4.82 (1.17)	2.44**
		Girls	59 (62.1)	36 (37.9)			
8.	Parenting as a whole	Boys	27 (24.3)	84 (75.7)	7.828**	6.00 (0.78)	7.81**
		Girls	09 (9.5)	86 (90.5)			

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicates percentages; NS-Non-significant; \* and \*\* indicates of significance of values at P=0.05 and P=0.01, respectively

Table 6 : Interrelationship between socio-demographic factors and models of parenting

Sr. No.	Socio-demographic factors	Rejection vs acceptance	Carelessness vs protection	Neglect vs indulgence	Utopian expectation vs realism	Lenient standards vs moralism	Freedom vs discipline	Faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation	Parenting as a whole
1.	Age	0.162*	0.157*	-0.156*	0.045	0.035	0.061	-0.021	0.046
2.	Ordinal position	-0.011	-0.068	-0.06	0.015	-0.105	-0.161*	0.005	-0.117
3.	Family size	-0.025	-0.037	-0.078	0.002	-0.145*	-0.089	-0.064	-0.084
4.	Education of father	0.01	0.062	0.025	-0.057	0.13	0.227**	0.035	0.111
5.	Education of mother	-0.013	0.034	0.055	0.007	0.095	0.111	-0.025	0.079
6.	Occupation of father	0.094	0.063	0.011	0.002	0.062	0.07	0.056	0.104
7.	Occupation of mother	0.05	-0.011	0.046	-0.008	-0.03	0.056	0.026	-0.006
8.	Family income	0.007	0.081	0.009	-0.055	0.069	0.089	0.006	0.075
9.	SES	0.055	0.096	0.02	-0.05	0.12	0.177*	0.046	0.136*

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicates percentages; \* and \*\* indicates of significance of values at P=0.05 and P=0.01, respectively

difference was observed between the mean values of boys and girls for all models of parenting except utopian expectation vs realism and faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation which indicated that boys and girls differed significantly in their perception about fathering. The perception of boys and girls about mothering (Table 5) also followed similar trend wherein a significant difference was noticed between the mean scores of boys and girls with regard to different models of parenting and overall parenting. This indicated that girls had positive perception about mothering compared to boys. Similar findings were reported by Vijayalaxmi and Kadapatti (2012) who noted that boys and girls have different perception towards parenting styles and the difference between the gender was also statistically significant. Further the comparison of male and female respondents on modes of parenting styles shows that the mean scores of the female respondents for all the perceived models of parenting styles (for mother, father and total parenting) was higher than the male respondents except Utopian expectation vs. Realism model. Berkien *et al.* (2012) also reported that girls perceive more emotional warmth from their parents than boys, whereas, boys perceive more maternal rejection than girls.

Table 6 represents the interrelation of socio-demographic factors with children's perception about parenting. The results revealed that age of the child had positive and significant relationship with rejection vs acceptance, carelessness vs protection whereas negative and significant relationship with neglect vs indulgence models of parenting. This indicated that as the age increased they had more favourable perception about parenting *i.e.* they felt that their parents were more accepting, protecting them and less indulgent about them. The ordinal position of the child had negative and significant relationship with lenient standards vs moralism model of parenting which means that first born children perceived their parents as more moralistic compared to later borns. Further education of the father and socio-economic status had positive and significant relationship with disciplining.

On the whole, the present study revealed that majority of children had positive perception about their both parents in different models of parenting except in faulty role expectation vs realistic role expectation. This means that, children's parents were accepting, protecting, indulging, realistic, moralistic, disciplining their children but were faulty in role expectation. Among the variables

studied, age, ordinal position, family size, education of the father and socio-economic status had significant influence on children's perception about parenting. The study suggests that there is a need to educate parents about parenting especially with respect to faulty role expectation as the children always feel embarrassed because of the unpredictable expectations of their parents. So, the parents should learn to exhibit reasonable control and have realistic expectations from their children.

Authors' affiliations:

S.S. PATIL AND P.G. HOLEYANNAVAR, AICRP on Child Development, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Rural Home Science College, University of Agricultural Sciences, DHARWAD (KARNATAKA) INDIA

Email : shakku.p357@gmail.com, poojagsh@gmail.com

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