

A study on parent child relationship as perceived by adolescents

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ABSTRACT

In tracing the development or the evolution of the organism from one state to another such as infancy, childhood, adolescence and so on, as synonyms sometimes with socialization, Freud focuses his attention on many developmental concepts such as libido, infantile sexuality, Oedipus or castration complexes as related to and developed out of the relationship with the family. Difference between one family and another then comes to be viewed as a major source of variation from individual to individual in the aspect of personality and social psychological development of children. The basic principle underlying a study of parental factor is that the parents act differentially toward their children depending on the sex of the child which is a common observation. Therefore the present study was undertaken to assess and compare selected dimensions of parent-child relationship of adolescent boys and girls (12-18 years) studying in Govt. Senior Secondary Schools of Bikaner city (Rajasthan). The total sample for the present study consisted of randomly selected 180 adolescents (90 boys and 90 girls) from six randomly selected Government Senior Secondary Schools. The result revealed that most of the boys and girls perceived their parent-child relationship under sometimes level regarding selected dimensions of parent-child relationship. There was no significance difference between the perception of boys in comparison to girls at 5 per cent and 1 per cent level of significance. It also shows that mean score of sometime level of boys was comparatively slightly higher than mean score of girls. There was no significant difference found between overall parent-child relationship of boys and girls. Thus it can be concluded that adolescents under study felt that their parents attitude and behaviour towards them was mediocre, *i.e.* their parents were neither too much protecting, loving etc. not too much neglecting, rejecting, demanding etc.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the period of transition between childhood to adulthood. It is a period when rapid physiological changes and demands for new social roles take place. The adolescents, due to these changes often

face a number of crises and dilemmas. It is a period of development from pubescence to adulthood. In this period, child moves from dependency to autonomy. It is a period of demanding significant adjustment to the physical and social changes which distinguish childhood behavior from adult behaviour. The period of adolescence

not only brings physical changes but psychological changes that make a child qualitatively different person. These changes affect the personality and adjustment in later life. Of the many different relationships people form over the course of the life span the relationship between parent and child is amongst most important. Adolescent needs guidance and help in individuating, but they do not wish to be overwhelmed by adult power. Parents should understand that differences in opinion would become especially evident during adolescence (Collins and Laursen, 2004). They may not like or approve of their adolescent's ideas or behaviours, but they should strive to support their teenagers' efforts to individuate even when this makes for strained relations. Individuals assimilate rules, patterns and beliefs held important by their particular family systems (Amato, 1994). Perhaps unconsciously for example, adolescents who are successful in schools and colleges tend to come from family system that value educational achievement and those who drop out of schools tend to come from family system that don't place much value in education (Mahony and Stattin, 2002). This holds true for many other adolescent's behaviours, teenagers who use recreational drugs, for instance, tend to come from family system where the adults use drugs (Chand *et al.*, 1975). Conflicts between teen and their parents invariably relate to parental attempts to exert control that teens view as uncalled for. Most concern how much freedom over their own conduct and activities adolescents should have (Chand *et al.*, 1975), parents and teenagers clash about the ages at which teens should be allowed to do certain things (Feldman and Quatman, 1988). The quality of the parent-child relationship is affected by the parents age, experience and self confidence. The stability of the parents marriage and the unique characteristics of the child compared with those of the parents (Forgays, 1998). As the child enters adolescence, biological, cognitive and emotional changes transform the parent-child relationship (Brook *et al.*, 2000). The child's surges for independence, may challenge parents authority. Many parents find rarely adolescence a difficult period. It is widely assumed that conflict between parents and children is an inherent feature of family life in adolescence, but systematic research on the so called generation gap indicates that the phenomenon has been exaggerated in the popular media (Feldman and Quatman, 1988). Early adolescence may be a time of the heightened bickering and somewhat

diminished closeness in the parent child relationship, but most disagreement between parent and young teenagers are over fairly mundane matters and most teenagers and parent agree on the essentials. Nevertheless, the increased frequency with which these squabbles occur may take its toll on parents mental health especially on the mothers. This period appears to be temporary however, and most parents and adolescence are able to establish a comfortable working relationship by the beginning of high school indeed by late adolescence most children report feeling as close to their parents as they did during elementary school (Sartor and Youniss, 2002 and Silk *et al.*, 2003). Parenting has four main styles, authoritarian, authoritative, permissive (indulgent) and detached (Fulligni and Eccles, 1993). Authoritarian parents are strict disciplinarians, often relying on physical punishment and the withdrawal of affection to shape their child's behaviour. Children raised with this parenting style are often moody, unhappy, fearful and irritable they tend to be shy, withdrawn and lacking self confidence, if affection is withheld the child commonly is rebellious and antisocial. Authoritative parents are both responsive and demanding, they are firm but they discipline with love and affection. This style of parenting often results in children who have high self esteem and are independent, inquisitive, happy, assertive and interactive. Permissive parents are responsive but not especially demanding. There are empty threats of punishment without setting units. Children of permissive parents may be disrespectful, disobedient, aggressive, irresponsible and defiant. They are insecure because they lack guidelines to direct their behaviour. Finally, disengaged (detached) parents are negative responsive nor demanding (Granic *et al.*, 2003n, Gray and Steinberg, 1994, Krevans and Gibbs, 1996 and Plontemayor, 1986). They may be careless or unaware of the child's needs for affection and discipline. Children whose parents are detached have higher numbers of psychological difficulties and behavior problems than other youngsters. Hence, the investigator intended to undertake the present study to assess and compare the selected parent-child relationship dimensions (Protecting, Symbolic Punishment, Rejecting, Object Punishment, Demanding Indifferent, Symbolic Reward, Loving, Object Reward and Neglecting.) as perceived by adolescents (12-18 years) of Government Senior Secondary Schools of Bikaner city.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The main aim of the study was to find out to assess and compare the selected parent-child relationship dimensions (Protecting, Symbolic Punishment, Rejecting, Object Punishment, Demanding Indifferent, Symbolic Reward, Loving, Object Reward and Neglecting.) as perceived by adolescents (12-18 years) of Government Senior Secondary Schools of Bikaner City.

Locale of the study :

The study was conducted in Government Senior Secondary Schools of Bikaner (Rajasthan) city.

Sample and its selection :

The total sample for the present study consisted of 180 respondents randomly selected from six randomly selected Government Senior Secondary Schools. The total sample was consisted of 180 respondents (90 boys + 90 girls) selected randomly (chit system) taking 5 Boys and 5 Girls from each age group *i.e.* 12-18 years (to maintain gender wise uniformity) for the present study.

Tools :

Selection and development of tools to achieve the objectives of research is an important step in any research. Keeping in mind the purpose of the study, the investigator used one major tool for data collection which was parent-child relationship scale.

Procedure of data collection :

The subjects selected for the present study were personally contacted at their schools. The parent child

relationship scale was distributed to them individually and they were expected to fill in the same as for the instructions given by the investigator and return it back to the Investigator without consulting each other. The tools were given to the subjects along with instructions to fill each tool in the order as given below:

Parent-child relationship scale

Section A – Background information :

The background information was filled by the respondents in which they gave their personal and familial information.

Section B – Parent-child relationship scale :

The subjects were asked to rate statements as to their own perception of their relationship with either father or mother on a five point scale ranging from “Always” to “Very rarely” weighted 5,4,3,2 and 1, respectively on the scale points.

Analysis of data :

Frequency and percentages were calculated to assess each of the ten dimensions of parent-child relationship of adolescents. ‘Z’ test was applied to compare each of the ten dimensions of parent-child relationship of adolescents.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Assessment of each of the ten dimensions of the parent-child relationship *i.e.* Protecting (PRO), Symbolic punishment (SP), Rejecting (REJ), Object punishment (OP), Demanding (DEM), Indifferent (IND), Symbolic reward (SR), Loving (LOV), Object reward (OR),

Levels	PRO	SP	REJ	OP	DEM	IND	SR	LOV	OR	NEG	PCR
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
Always	- (0)	4 (2.22)	5 (2.77)	6 (3.33)	4 (2.22)	34 (18.88)	- (0)	- (0)	- (0)	6 (3.33)	- (0)
Very often	34 (18.88)	25 (13.88)	21 (11.66)	21 (11.66)	29 (16.11)	25 (13.88)	36 (20.00)	30 (16.66)	35 (19.44)	18 (10.00)	27 (15.00)
Sometimes	111 (61.66)	121 (67.22)	135 (75)	130 (72.22)	128 (71.11)	105 (58.33)	108 (60)	120 (66.66)	117 (65)	61 (33.88)	148 (82.22)
Rarely	32 (17.77)	19 (10.55)	19 (10.55)	21 (11.66)	16 (8.88)	10 (5.55)	33 (18.33)	28 (15.55)	28 (15.55)	93 (51.66)	5 (2.78)
Very rarely	3 (1.66)	11 (6.11)	- (0)	2 (1.11)	3 (1.66)	6 (3.33)	3 (1.66)	2 (1.11)	- (0)	2 (1.11)	20 (11.11)

PRO = Protecting, SP = Symbolic punishment, REJ = Rejecting, OP = Object punishment, DEM = Demanding, IND = Indifferent, SR = Symbolic reward, LOV = Loving, OR = Object reward, NEG = Neglecting, PCR = Parent-child relationship, Frequency = F, Percentage (%)

Table 2 : Comparison between boys and girls of Government Senior Secondary Schools regarding each of the ten dimensions of parent-child relationship					
Sr. No.	Aspects	Levels	Boys	Girls	'Z' value
			F (%)	F (%)	
1.	<i>Protecting</i> (PRO)	Always	--	--	5.241**
		Very often	20 (22.22)	15 (16.67)	
		Sometimes	62 (68.89)	58 (64.44)	
		Rarely	8 (8.89)	9 (10.0)	
2.	<i>Symbolic punishment</i> (SP)	Very rarely	--	8 (8.89)	3.249**
		Always	3 (3.33)	3 (3.33)	
		Very often	18 (20)	16 (17.80)	
		Sometimes	61 (67.78)	50 (55.60)	
3.	<i>Rejecting</i> (REJ)	Rarely	8 (8.89)	21 (23.33)	2.886**
		Very rarely	- -	- -	
		Always	4 (4.44)	1 (1.11)	
		Very often	10 (11.11)	7 (7.78)	
4.	<i>Object punishment</i> (OP)	Sometimes	66 (73.33)	51 (56.67)	5.747**
		Rarely	10 (11.11)	19 (21.11)	
		Very rarely	- -	12 (13.33)	
		Always	1 (1.11)	1 (1.11)	
5.	<i>Demanding</i> (DEM)	Very often	18 (20)	10 (11.11)	1.35 NS
		Sometimes	57 (63.33)	63 (70)	
		Rarely	12 (13.33)	15 (16.67)	
		Very rarely	2 (2.22)	1 (1.11)	
6.	<i>Indifferent</i> (IND)	Always	1 (1.11)	1 (1.11)	1.675 NS
		Very often	18 (20)	11 (12.11)	
		Sometimes	57 (63.33)	69 (76.66)	
		Rarely	12 (13.33)	8 (8.89)	
7.	<i>Symbolic reward</i> (SR)	Very rarely	2 (2.22)	1 (1.11)	6.8481**
		Always	5 (5.55)	2 (2.22)	
		Very often	13 (14.44)	11 (12.2)	
		Sometimes	66 (73.33)	62 (68.89)	
8.	<i>Loving</i> (LOV)	Rarely	6 (6.66)	10 (11.11)	6.1132**
		Very rarely	- -	5 (5.55)	
		Always	6 (6.66)	- -	
		Very often	11 (12.22)	14 (15.55)	
9.	<i>Object reward</i>	Sometimes	66 (73.33)	66 (73.33)	10.7148**
		Rarely	7 (7.78)	5 (5.55)	
		Very rarely	- -	5 (5.55)	
		Always	4 (4.44)	1 (1.11)	
10.	<i>Neglecting</i> (NEG)	Very often	22 (24.44)	16 (17.78)	0.7770 NS
		Sometimes	48 (53.33)	58 (64.44)	
		Rarely	16 (17.77)	9 (10)	
		Very rarely	--	6 (6.67)	
11.	<i>Overall Parent-child relationship</i> (PCR)	Always	4 (4.44)	- -	1.23 NS
		Very often	10 (11.11)	15 (16.67)	
		Sometimes	66 (73.33)	62 (68.81)	
		Rarely	10 (11.11)	10 (11.11)	
		Very rarely	- -	3 (3.33)	
		Always	3 (3.33)	3 (3.33)	
		Very often	7 (7.78)	9 (10)	
		Sometimes	61 (67.78)	64 (71.11)	
		Rarely	18 (20)	14 (15.56)	
		Very rarely	1 (1.11)	-	
		Always	- -	5 (5.56)	
		Very often	- -	- -	
		Sometimes	90 (100)	85 (94.44)	
		Rarely	- -	- -	
		Very rarely	- -	- -	
		Always	- -	- -	

NS = Non-significant at 5 per cent level of significance

* and ** indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

Neglecting (NEG) in 180 Adolescent Boys and Girls (12-18 years) studying in Government Senior Secondary Schools of Bikaner city.

The overall results in Table 1 reflected that most of the adolescents 82.22 per cent perceived and viewed their parents to be sometimes (average) protecting, punishing (symbolic object); rejecting, demanding, indifferent loving, neglecting and rewarding (symbolic and object) rather than always and very rarely on the parent-child relationship scale. It depicts that adolescents perceived that their parents love, help and support them whenever needed and also punish their children when they do not behave according to them. The results of above dimension can be supported by the study of Bandura *et al.* (1996) in which he reveals that parents can effect their children's educational achievement by becoming involved in their children's schooling : acting advocates for their children and impressing teachers with the seriousness of the family educational goals.

Comparison between adolescent boys and girls (12-18 years) regarding each of the ten dimensions of parent-child relationship *i.e.* Protecting (PRO), Symbolic punishment (SP), Rejecting (REJ), Object punishment (OP), Demanding (DEM), Indifferent (IND), Symbolic reward (SR), Loving (LOV), Object reward (OR), Neglecting (NEG) in 90 adolescent girls (12-18 years) studying in Government Senior Secondary Schools of Bikaner city.

The frequency, percentage and 'Z' value of adolescents were calculated to compare each of the ten dimensions of parent-child relationship for 90 boys and 90 girls.

The findings regarding comparison between 90 boys and 90 girls (12-18 years) each of the ten dimensions of parent-child relationship studying in Government Senior Secondary Schools of Bikaner city have been explained in this section.

The overview of findings in Table 2 depicts that almost all the boys fell under sometimes level as per overall parent-child relationship in comparison to girls *i.e.* 94.44 per cent on PCR scale. There was no significant difference found between overall parent-child relationship of boys and girls. It can be concluded that adolescents under study felt that their parent's attitude and behaviour towards them was mediocre, *i.e.* their parents were neither too much protecting, loving etc. nor too much neglecting, rejecting, demanding etc. Therefore,

parents of the adolescents under study need not to be given counseling and guidance in most of the dimensions of PCR. Thus, the results had clearly shown that both boys and girls perceived their parent-child relationship as mediocre. Their parents were neither too much protecting, loving etc. Nor too much neglecting, rejecting, demanding etc. Therefore, parents of adolescents under study don't require counseling. Positive parent-child relationships provide the foundation for children's learning. With parents' sensitive, responsive, and predictable care, young children develop the skills they need to succeed in life. Early parent-child relationships have powerful effects on children's emotional well-being (Dawson and Ashman, 2000), their basic coping and problem-solving abilities, and their future capacity for relationships (Lerner *et al.*, 2002). Through these interactions, children learn skills they need to engage with others and to succeed in different environments (Rogoff, 2003).

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