

Parental encouragement among adolescents: A study of locale and gender differences

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Parents play an important role in all round development of the child. The emotional bondage and the intimacy between parents and their children give a sense of security to the children and help in the development of a positive self - concept. Parental encouragement is one of the aspects of parent treatment patterns. In encouragement the parents help the child in such a way that he may not feel disheartened at a particular point of difficulty. Parental encouragement goes a long way in helping the children to achieve better in different spheres of life. In the present investigation, an attempt has been made to study the relationship of locale and gender as determinants of parental encouragement among adolescents. The study was conducted on 200 adolescents (100 boys and 100 girls) in the age range of 14-16 years residing in rural and urban areas of Ludhiana. Agarwal Parental Encouragement Scale developed by Agarwal (1999) was used to measure the parental encouragement as perceived by the adolescents. The test contained a total number of 80 items under eight dimensions of parental encouragement. Significant gender differences existed in parental encouragement whereas significant locale differences were found in the dimensions of parental encouragement among rural and urban respondents.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Adolescents, Parental encouragement, Gender differences

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The behavioral characteristics of any individual can largely be assessed not only by person alone, but also by his environment in which he is brought up. Each child needs an experientially rich environment. The optimal environment for the infant is one in which the child is cared for in his home in the contact of a warm and continuous relationship with her own mother under conditions of varied input. Parental encouragement also contributes a lot in the development of the child and purgation of his inherent qualities (Varshney, 2007). Parents play an important role in all - round development of the child. The emotional bondage and the intimacy between parents and their children gives a sense of security to the children and helps in the development of a positive concept of self. Parental encouragement is one of the aspects of parent treatment patterns. In encouragement the parents help the child in such a way that he may not feel disheartened at a particular point of difficulty. The

encouragement may be given in the form of approval or in the form of asking the child to modify his behaviour. In whatever way the parents encourage their children, it has a lasting effect on their way of thinking and doing. Rossi (1985) has defined the term in these words - "when father and mother approve or appreciate any activity related to education or revoke any hurdle felt by the student in the process or guide him the right and wrong - this entire spectrum of activity comes within the purview of parental encouragement". Therefore, it is a treatment originating from parents towards the child with a view to enhancing the possibilities of future occurrence of good behaviour by care, concern, approval and guidance. Parental encouragement goes a long way in helping the children to achieve better in different spheres of life.

Parental encouragement influences a child's feeling of confidence, his motivational level and his ability to perform

with the sense of achievement in life. Children take doubtlessly parents as model for achievement behaviour and aspiration. Achievement motivation is developed in early relationship between a child and his parents. In early years of his life, if the growing child receives a good amount of recognition, praise and reward for his accomplishments, he develops a sense of achievement. In a multidimensional model proposed by Grolnick and Slowiaizek (1994), parental involvement is broadly defined as the allocation of resources by the parents to child in a given domain. It takes many forms including the provision of a secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation, parent child discussion and high aspiration related to good citizenship, contact with school to share information, participation in school events and participation in the work of the school. If the parents show a favourable attitude towards their child in terms of encouragement, support, care, intimacy, the child identifies himself with his parents and this help in developing a better self - concept in comparison to his age mates.

Adolescence is considered as the most important transitional period of life, as adolescents face an intense turmoil because of the cognitive, biological and social changes taking place in this period. This is also the period of psychological transition from a child who has to live in a family to an adult who has to live in a society. According to Jerslid (1961) adolescence is that period during which boys and girls move from childhood to adulthood physically, emotionally, mentally and socially.

Adolescence is the transitional stage of human development in which a juvenile matures into an adult. This transition involves biological, social and psychological changes though the biological ones are the easiest to measure objectively. How stressful these challenges prove how ever depends on a variety of circumstances. For some adolescents, the time of puberty can, make these years especially hard or easy. For others their newly forming ability to reason abstractly can make like seem suddenly confusing; at the same time it also reveals exciting new possibilities for the future. The adolescent, far more variable than the infant in his growth and behaviour, is at an in-between stage of development. At one instance displaying the behaviour and feelings of a child and at others times acting quite grown up. So, prone are we to dichotomize people as adult or children that we are perplexed about how to respond to persons who are in between and something of both.

Parental encouragement is related to positive self-concept, personal need satisfaction, scholastic achievement and psychological well-being of adolescents. A feeling of psychological well being helps to avoid a host of problems related directly or indirectly to the adolescent's pattern of emotional responses.

Keeping this in mind, the present study was conducted to study the locale and gender differences in parental encouragement among adolescents.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The sample for the present study comprised of 200 adolescents within the age range of 14-16 years, belonging to nuclear and two parent intact families. For selection of the sample, list of Government Higher and Senior Secondary School of Ludhiana district was procured from District Education Officer, Ludhiana. For urban sample: one zone *i.e.* Ludhiana-D was purposively selected from the five zones of Ludhiana urban. Again from this selected zone two schools were purposively selected for the data collection. For rural sample: Two government Senior Secondary Schools were purposively selected from the selected block *i.e.* Ludhiana-I. Two schools were purposively selected from this block. Out of these selected rural and urban schools, the required number of respondents were randomly selected from the list of adolescents prepared from the school records. Thus, a total of 200 adolescents equally distributed both over the locale and gender categories were randomly selected.

Agarwal Parental Encouragement Scale development by Agarwal (1999) was used to measure the parental encouragement as perceived by the adolescents. The test contained a total number of 80 items under 8 dimensions of parental encouragement namely, physical environment, giving freedom, sense of responsibility, showing concern, parent participation, building confidence/ motivation, showing trust and giving healthy study environment. The scoring was done as per the instructions given in the manual of the scale.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of urban and rural respondents across the various levels of parental encouragement. Results showed that 44 per cent of urban male respondents had average level of parental

Table 1: Gender wise percentage distribution of urban and rural respondents across various levels of parental encouragement

| Parental encouragement | Urban male (n=100) | Urban female (n=100) | Z-value | Rural male (n=100) | Rural female (n=100) | Z-value |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------|--------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Low | 17 (34.00) | 24 (48.00) | 1.423 | 17 (34.00) | 20 (40.0) | 0.621 |
| Average | 22 (44.00) | 14 (28.00) | 1.667 | 20 (40.00) | 18 (36.00) | 0.412 |
| High | 11 (22.00) | 12 (24.00) | 0.238 | 13 (26.00) | 12 (24.00) | 0.231 |

encouragement, followed by 34 per cent and 22 per cent who had low and high level of parental encouragement, respectively. In case of urban females, 28 per cent of female respondents had average level of parental encouragement, followed by 48 per cent in low and 24 per cent in high category. Non-significant differences existed among urban males and females in all the levels of parental encouragement.

Table 1 also represents percentage distribution of rural respondents across the various levels of parental encouragement. Results showed that 40 per cent of the rural male respondents had average level of parental encouragement, followed by 34 per cent and 26 per cent who had low and high level of parental encouragement, respectively. In case of rural females, 36 per cent of female respondents had average level of parental encouragement, followed by 40 per cent in low and 24 per cent in high level. Non-significant differences existed among rural males and females in all the levels of parental encouragement.

Table 2 elucidates the percentage distribution of urban and rural respondents across various levels of parental encouragement. Result indicates that 37 per cent of the urban respondents and 41 per cent of the rural respondents had average level of parental encouragement, followed by 29 per cent of urban respondents and 31 per cent of rural respondents who had high level of parental encouragement. Whereas 34 per cent of urban respondents and 28 per cent of rural respondents had low level of parental encouragement. Non-significant differences existed among urban and rural

respondents in all the levels of parental encouragement.

Table 3 shows gender differences among the respondents across various dimensions of parental encouragement. It is very much clear from the table that non-significant gender differences existed in all the dimensions *i.e.* physical environment, giving freedom, sense of responsibility, showing concern, parent participation, building confidence/motivation/good habits, showing trust, and giving study environment.

But a critical look at mean values showed that males were scoring slightly higher mean scores than females in physical environment, giving freedom, sense of responsibility, showing concern, giving study environment, parent participation and building confidence/motivation/good habits. But in the dimension of showing trust females scored higher mean values than males.

Table 4 depicts locale differences among rural and urban respondents on various dimensions of parental encouragement. It is very much clear from the table that significant differences existed in the dimensions of showing concern, parent participation, building confidence/motivation /good habits and giving study environment and non-significant differences existed in the dimensions of physical environment, giving freedom, sense of responsibility and showing trust.

A critical look at the mean values showed that rural respondents were scoring slightly higher mean values than urban respondents in the dimensions *i.e.* physical environment, giving freedom, sense of responsibility,

Table 2 : Percentage distribution of urban and rural respondents across various levels of parental encouragement

| Parental encouragement | Urban (n= 100) | Rural (n= 100) | Z-value |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------|
| Low | 34 (34.00) | 28 (28.00) | 0.917 |
| Average | 37 (37.00) | 41 (41.00) | 0.580 |
| High | 29 (29.00) | 31 (31.00) | 0.309 |

Table 3: Gender differences in the dimensions of parental encouragement mean scores (\pm S.D.) among adolescents

| Dimensions of parental encouragement | Male (n=100) | | Female (n=100) | | t-value |
|---|--------------|-------|----------------|-------|---------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | |
| Physical environment | 43.66 | 6.67 | 43.26 | 8.54 | 0.37 |
| Giving freedom | 8.15 | 1.96 | 7.72 | 1.86 | 1.59 |
| Sense of responsibility | 36.63 | 5.11 | 36.11 | 4.99 | 0.73 |
| Showing concern | 124.75 | 15.17 | 121.99 | 18.02 | 1.17 |
| Parent participation | 26.97 | 4.75 | 27.54 | 5.62 | 0.78 |
| Building confidence/motivation/ good habits | 54.90 | 7.25 | 55.60 | 7.29 | 0.68 |
| Showing trust | 16.72 | 2.95 | 16.77 | 2.73 | 0.12 |
| Giving study environment | 11.45 | 2.80 | 11.33 | 2.91 | 0.30 |
| Total | 323.23 | 38.79 | 320.32 | 45.80 | 0.49 |

showing concern, parent participation, building confidence/motivation/good habits and giving study environment. But in the dimension of showing trust, urban respondents scored slightly higher than rural respondents.

Table 5 indicates gender wise distribution of respondents as per different levels of parental encouragement. Majority of the respondents reported high level of parental encouragement followed by average and low. Chi-square value depicted gender differences to be non-significant across different levels of parental encouragement was concerned.

Table 6 elucidates locale wise distribution of respondents as per different levels of parental encouragement. Majority of the respondents (rural and urban) reported high level of parental encouragement followed by average and low. Chi-square value depicted locale differences to be significant across different levels of parental encouragement was concerned.

The locale differences were found to be significant.

Higher percentage of rural respondents were perceiving high level of parental encouragement as compared to urban respondents.

Findings of the present study revealed that non-significant gender differences existed in parental encouragement levels of male and female respondents indicating that male and female adolescents perceived their parents to be unbiased as far as parental encouragement is concerned. Indicating that both boys and girls were equally encouraged by their parents. On the other hand significant locale differences existed between urban and rural respondents in selected dimensions of parental encouragement like showing concern, parent participation, building confidence/good habits and giving study environment. Carter and Wajthiewicz (2000) after studying the parental encouragement on a sample of 25,000 eight grade students concluded that parental encouragement depends on the gender of the child, generally daughters experience more parental involvement than sons. Whereas

Table 4 : Locale wise differences across different dimensions of parental encouragement mean scores (Mean±SD) among adolescents)

| Dimensions of parental encouragement | Male (n=100) | | Female (n=100) | | t-value |
|---|--------------|-------|----------------|-------|---------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | |
| Physical environment | 44.27 | 7.36 | 42.65 | 7.87 | 1.50 |
| Giving freedom | 8.14 | 1.91 | 7.73 | 1.92 | 1.51 |
| Sense of responsibility | 36.76 | 4.65 | 35.98 | 5.40 | 1.10 |
| Showing concern | 126.58 | 15.20 | 120.16 | 17.52 | 2.77** |
| Parent participation | 28.04 | 4.80 | 26.47 | 5.48 | 2.16* |
| Building confidence/motivation/ good habits | 56.51 | 6.49 | 53.99 | 7.79 | 2.49* |
| Showing trust | 16.71 | 2.76 | 16.78 | 2.93 | 0.17 |
| Giving study environment | 11.81 | 2.73 | 10.97 | 2.91 | 2.11* |
| Total | 328.82 | 38.77 | 314.73 | 44.76 | 2.91** |

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

Table 5 : Gender wise distribution of respondents across different levels of parental encouragement

| Parental encouragement | Male (n=100) | | Female (n=100) | | χ ² -value | D.F. |
|------------------------|--------------|-------|----------------|-------|-----------------------|------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | | |
| Low | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 3.00 | 0.50 | 1 |
| Average | 18 | 18.00 | 19 | 19.00 | | |
| High | 82 | 82.00 | 78 | 78.00 | | |

Table 6 : Locale wise distribution of respondents across different levels of parental encouragement

| Parental encouragement | Rural (n=100) | | Urban (n=100) | | χ ² -value | D.F. |
|------------------------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|-----------------------|------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | | |
| Low | 1 | 1.00 | 2 | 2.00 | 6.13* | 1 |
| Average | 12 | 12.00 | 25 | 25.00 | | |
| High | 87 | 87.00 | 73 | 73.00 | | |

* indicate significance of value at P=0.05

Malik and Chawla (2009) concluded that there existed no gender differences in respect of parental encouragement of children.

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