



PERCEIVED PARENTAL BEHAVIOUR OF ADOLESCENTS: GENDER DIFFERENCES

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Abstract

Adolescence is a period of transition at various levels. This crucial phase in life is very important because self confidence, knowledge and life skills developed at this stage which lay the foundation for future quality of life. During this age, children need support and guidance from their parents. The perception of parental support and control by the adolescents is more important than what parents think about their care. Difference in gender role socialization still prevails in India. Parents tend to have higher aspiration for their male child; they realize that he should be more disciplined as he has to support family. On the other hand, girls may be valued more in terms of feminine roles as house maker and are likely to be more protected and trained for finer pursuits. Present study has been designed to investigate the impact of gender and age on perceived parental behavior of adolescents. The total sample for the study was 240 adolescents (120 boys and 120 girls) between the age group from 13 to 18 years. The sample was divided into two subgroups, i.e. 13 – 15 years and 16 – 18 years. Results reveal that Boy adolescents perceived more parental control than girl adolescents. There is no significant difference in parental support between boys and girls. Moreover, no significant difference was found in parental support and control among early and late adolescents.

Key Words: Perceived Parental Behavior, Early and Late Adolescents,

Introduction

Adolescence is a turbulent as well as dynamic period of one's life. It is an important stage of development characterized by maximum physiological, psychological and social changes, eg; development of growing sexual maturity, discovering one's self, defining personal values and social direction. During this difficult period of transition, the marked physical, psychological, emotional and social changes can lead to both, a high self esteem and self confidence as well as bring negative symptoms like self centeredness, showing off, stubbornness and irritability. Adolescents learn to view self, others and life through the eyes of others, so this is the time when one has actually not become independent but does not want to be dependent. The speed of changes may be pass the speed of adjustments. This may cause adolescents to lose the track of positive and realistic perception. Adolescents, being confused due to lack of experience, are not able to choose the right direction and tend to develop many false beliefs. So, there is a need of proper support and guidance from parents during this crucial period of life.

Parenting is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of children from infancy to adulthood. Baumrid (1991) identified the pattern of parenting styles based upon two aspects of parental behaviour, responsiveness (or warmth) and demandingness (or control). Responsiveness or warmth is the degree to which the parents display involvement, responsiveness and support (Hart et al 2003). Warm and supportive parenting involves behaviour that physically and emotionally approves love and care (Bosco et al 2003). Demandingness or control on the other hand is the level of control, maturity, demands and supervision that people utilize throughout the course of their parenting.

When children enter the adolescent age, they aspire to look mature and gain independence. Parents adjust their supervisory practices to allow them more freedom, independence and decision making. Parents know that at a certain point they must stop relying on their own vigilance, discipline and control and begin to rely and have trust on their children's responsibilities and integrity. But early adolescence which is the stage of beginning to strive for own autonomy, presents new challenges for the parents (Crean 2008). Authoritarian parents (ie; parents who are lacking responsiveness and are high in control) are not likely to respond to these challenges in a positive way. Instead they may stifle adolescent's autonomy and remain rigid in their expectations. (Paulussen, Hoogeboern 2008), whereas authoritative and permissive parents respond differently.

Difference in gender role socialization still prevails in India. Parents tend to have higher aspiration for their male child. They realize that he should be more disciplined as he would have to support the family. On the other hand a girl may be valued more in terms of feminine role as house maker and is likely to be more protected and trained for finer pursuits. Although some researchers have investigated the impact of gender on parent-adolescent relationship, the role of gender in these relationships has drawn limited empirical attention. Brown & Steinberg (1993) concluded that there were few studies that



reported findings separately for male and female to permit reliable analyses. There are several reasons which show changes in behaviour of parents with gender during adolescence. On average, girls undergo puberty earlier and are socially more advanced than boys. **Taylor (1996)** so if physical and social maturity drive changes in the parent-child relationship, one would expect to observe changes earlier in adolescence with girls than with boys.

In summary, Adolescence is a learning period of life and parenting plays an important role in the personality development of adolescents undergoing structural, emotional and interactional transformation. In family, everyone especially parents play a very important role in adolescent development. Parenting depending on its quality has been found to have both positive as well as negative influence on adolescents. Therefore it seems logical to explore the gender and age difference in perceived parental behaviour of adolescents.

In the light of above discussion the present study has been planned to answer few questions:

- Do male and female adolescents perceive parental behavior differently?
- Is there gender difference in perceived parental behavior in early and late adolescents?

Objectives

1. To find out the gender difference in perceived parental behavior of adolescents.
2. To examine the change in perceived parental behavior in early and late adolescents.

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant gender difference in perceived parental support and control among adolescents.
2. There will be significant difference in perceived parental support and control in early and late adolescent groups.

Methodology

Sample: The sample of the present study comprised of 240 students from class 8th to 12th standard selected from Hindi medium schools of Lucknow. The age range of respondents was 13-18years who were divided into two groups i.e. 13-15 and 16-18 years. 120 subjects were girls while 120 were boys. The sample was incidentally selected. Parents of all the participants were at least graduate and in service.

Measures

Cornell parent behavior Description, 4th version, By – Bronfenbrenner, Devereux, Jr and Rodgers (1966) was used. Hindi version of the questionnaire was developed for the study. The Cornell parent behavior description is a group administered questionnaire in the form of rating scale intended to be administered solely for the purpose of research in the antecedent and consequences of children’s perception of the behavior of their parents towards them. The ‘short form’ (forth version) was used in the present study. It requires the child to answer question about how his parents acted towards him. In this version of the instrument, parental support and control each is measured by set of 24 items. A typical items in the support scale is “If have a problem, I can count on him/ her to help me out” and one for the control scale reads “If I do not do what is expected of me , he / she is very strict about it”. The subjects may be asked to respond on these items for each parent on a 5 point likert-type scale ranging from “never” to” very often”. Bronfenbrenner, Devereux, Jr and Rodgers(1966) reported cronbach alpha values for the subscales ranging from .87 to .74. The content, criterion and discriminant validity were also reported to be high. For the hindi version scale , developed for the present study, obtained cronbach alpha values were .80 and .78 respectively.

Method of data analysis: Descriptive statistics (mean and standard – deviation) and t-test were used for the analysis of data.

Result and Discussion

After collection of the data and scoring, the data was statistically analyzed by SPSS version 20 .Descriptive statistics (Mean and SD) was calculated for both the groups. In order to find out significance of difference in means of parental behavior of both the groups, t-test was calculated.

Table -1 Difference in Parental control across gender.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Boys	120	39.83	5.369	5.677**
Girls	120	35.67	5.984	

.05=P<1.97* , .01=P<2.59** , .10=P<1.65# , Ns= No significant



Table-1 shows the significance of mean difference in parental control between boys and girls. The obtained value is 5.677** (P<.01). So the findings of this study revealed that male adolescents perceived more parental control than female adolescents. Similar findings have been reported by **Cowan & pruet** (2009) who found that parents specially father controlled their sons with a rather heavy-hand in that their disciplinary methods were less rational and supportive and more intrusive as compared to their daughter. The probable reason of this finding may be that boys are raised to be more self-reliant, achievement-oriented, tough and aggressive, sexually assertive and emotionally controlled as compared to girls. In adolescent age, boys are involved in an anxiety provoking search for identity. Parents may invest higher aspiration for their sons. They realize that sons should be disciplined more as compared to daughters. **Felicia, Tuggle (2004)** found that parental control was much more in male adolescent. **Sorbring and Rodholm (2003)** found those fathers are more encouraging to their sons as compared to daughter.

Table 2, Difference in Parental support across gender.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Boys	120	43.23	6.191	1.069 Ns
Girls	120	43.92	3.446	

.05=P<1.97*, .01=P<2.59**, .10=P<1.65#, Ns= No significant

Table-2 shows the significance of difference in parental support across gender. No significant difference in parental support between boys and girls has been found. The obtained t-value is 1.069 which is non significant. So the findings of this study revealed that perceived parental support in boys and girls are equal. Similar findings have been reported by **Tripathi (2008)** who found that Psychological and emotional support from father and mother was more or less equal among adolescents boys and girls. The reason may be that educated parents do not make any discrimination between their son and daughter so that their girl child may also excel in her career goals as their male child. This is to be noted here that all the parents of respondents were at least graduate. Parents want to prepare their child either boy or girl for adult role taking and provide the similar opportunities and freedom to them.

In the light of above findings hypothesis no. one stating “There will be significant gender difference in perceived parental support and control among adolescents” is partially accepted.

Table -3 Difference in Parental support and Parental control across age.

Age	N	Mean	SD	t-test
Ps	Early	120	43.18	1.199
	Late	120	43.96	Ns
Pc	Early	120	37.56	.490
	Late	120	37.94	Ns

.05=P<1.97*, .01=P<2.59**, .10=P<1.65#, Ns= No significant

Table-3 shows the significant of mean difference in parental support and parental control across age groups. The obtained t-values for parental support and parental control are 1.199 and .490 respectively which are not significant. These finding of this study revealed that there is no significant difference in perceived parental support and control among the adolescents of two (early and late) age groups with advancement in age. Therefore hypothesis no two stating “There will be significant difference in perceived parental support and control in early and late adolescent groups” is rejected.

The perception of parental support and control by the adolescents is more important than what parents think about their care. It seems that parents in India do not bring changes in their support and control level extended to their adolescent children with advancement in age. They do not treat their children to be independent and feel that their children need parental support and control for long years. Similar finding have been reported by **Steinberg (2008)** who found that there is no significant difference in parental support and control among the early and late adolescents group.

India has a collectivistic culture where elders are given respect and social values are nurtured within children. It appears that due to long years of parenting extended to adolescent children, they have more faith and respect towards their parents as compared to their western counterparts. More adolescents from the Indian group acknowledged their responsibility to accommodate to parents on account of faith in parents’ experience, respect for them and the belief that parents have children’s welfare at heart. Although adolescents from Indian and American groups also endorsed the need for parent accommodation to adolescent views, parent compromise featured more in the Indian immigrant group (**Kapadia, 2008**).



Conclusion

The results indicate that adolescent sons perceive greater parental control as compared to daughters while both perceive the similar level of parental support. There is no change in parental support and control with advancement in the age of adolescents. Future researches should explore the impact of long parenting years on the well being and mental health of adolescents.

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