

A Comparative Study on Adolescent-Parent Relationship among Boys and Girls in a Rural Setting

Shaheeda Shaban and Nadhia Hussain Mattoo

Institute of Home Science, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India

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ABSTRACT The present study was aimed to study the relationship of adolescent boys and girls from district Anantnag of Kashmir valley with their mothers and fathers. To gather information on a sample of 40 male and 40 female respondents, Parent-Child relationship Scale developed by Nalini Rao (1989) was used. The results reveal that a highly significant difference was observed between the use of symbolic punishment, rejecting, loving dimension and gender of the child while no significant difference was found when protecting dimension was compared to the gender of the adolescent.

INTRODUCTION

The word adolescence is derived from the Latin word, “adolescere” which means to grow up. Adolescence is the developmental transition between childhood and adulthood entailing major physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. Adolescence is generally considered to begin with puberty the process that leads to sexual maturity or fertility- the ability to reproduce. Adolescence lasts from about age eleven or twelve until late teens or early twenties. There are different views regarding the ages at which boys and girls mature, but early adolescence usually begins with age 11. It is the transition out of the childhood and offers opportunities for growth, not only in physical dimensions, but also in cognitive and social competence, autonomy, self-esteem and intimacy. This period also carries great risks. Some young people have trouble handling so many changes at once and may need help in overcoming dangers along the way.

Among the changes that can influence parent - adolescent relationships are puberty, expanded logical reasoning, increased idealistic thought, and violated expectations, changes in schooling, peers, friendships, dating and movement towards independence. Several investigations have shown that conflict between parents

and adolescents, especially between and mothers and sons, is the most stressful during the apex of pubertal growth (Steinberg 1988). Also, early maturing adolescents experience more conflict with their parents than adolescents who mature early or on time (Collins and Steinberg 2006).

Rationale/ Justification: The expectations of adolescents and their parents often seem violated as adolescents change dramatically during the course of puberty. Many parents see their child ranging from a compliant being into someone who is non-compliant, oppositional and resistant to parental standards. Parents often clamp down and put more pressure on the adolescent to conform to parental standards. Many parents often deal with the young adolescents as if they expect him or her to become a mature being within the next 10 to 15 minutes. But the transition from childhood to adulthood is a long journey with many hills and valleys.

A common belief is that there is a huge gulf that separates parents and adolescents in the form of a so called generation gap, that is, during adolescence the values and attitudes of adolescents become increasingly distanced from those of their parents. For the most part, the generation gap is a stereotype.

That said, the fact remains that early adolescence is a time when parent- adolescent conflict escalates beyond parent-child conflict. This increase may be due to a number of factors involving the maturation of the adolescent and the maturation of parents. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to assess the relationship of adolescent boys and girls with their parents and to compare their relationship with their fathers and mothers.

Address for correspondence:
Ms. Shaheeda Shaban
C/o Nadhia Hussain Mattoo
Institute of Home Science
University of Kashmir
Hazratbal, Srinagar 190 001
Jammu and Kashmir, India
Mobile: 09622926576, 09622926535
E-mail: shahida.shaban@yahoo.com

Review of Related Literature

Barber et al. (2001) in a study of 984 children and their parents examined the correlated of adolescent psychological adjustment. Based on previous research, it was expected that parental involvement and limit setting would predict conduct disorder scores and that variables associated with parent-child relationship, particularly parent-child synchrony, would be more closely related to emotional adjustment and social relationship measures. Contrary to expectations, parenting practices were unrelated to adolescent conduct disorder, but family harmony and adult-child synchrony predicted all measures of adolescent adjustment. It is concluded that positive parenting is not something adults do to children but a quality of the parent-child relationship characterized by family harmony and parental empathy.

Finkenauer (2002) conducted a cross-sectional study to examine the links between secrecy and psychological well-being and emotional autonomy among 227 younger (12-13 years) and older (16-18 years) adolescents. Results showed that keeping secrets from parents is associated with physical and psychological disadvantages in adolescence. Confirming the prediction, however, secrecy was also related to adolescent's emotional autonomy.

Allen et al. (2003) in a study sought to identify ways in which adolescents' security, as assessed via the Adult Attachment Interview, is manifest in qualities of the secure base provided by the mother-adolescent relationship. Assessments included data coded from mother – adolescents' interactions, test based data, and adolescents' self reports obtained from an ethnically and socio-economically diverse sample moderately at risk of 9th and 10th graders. This study found several robust markers of adolescents' attachment security in the mother-adolescent relationship. Each of these markers was found to contribute unique variance to explaining adolescents security, and in combination, they accounted for as much as 40 % of the raw variance in adolescent security. These findings suggest that security is closely connected to the workings of the mother-adolescent relationship via a secure-base phenomenon in which the teen can explore independence in thought and speech from the secure base of a maternal relationship characterized by maternal attunement to the adolescent and maternal supportiveness.

Tinkew et al. (2006) used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997, Rounds 1 to 3 (N=5,345), among adolescents in intact families and found father-child relationship and father's parenting styles as predictors of first delinquency and substance use. Discrete time logistic regressions indicate that a more positive father-child relationship predicts a reduced risk of engagement in multiple first risky behaviours. Having a father with an authoritarian parenting style is associated with an increased risk of engaging in delinquent activity and substance use. Two-way interaction models further indicate that the negative effect of authoritarian parenting is reduced when fathers have a positive relationship with their adolescent. Permissive parenting also predicts less risky behavior when the father-child relationship is positive. The positive influence of the father-child relationship on risk behaviours is stronger for male than for female adolescents.

Smetana et al. (2006) in a study of 276 ethnically diverse, lower middle class 9th and 12th graders and their parents examined beliefs about parent's legitimate authority and adolescents obligations to disclose to parents and actual disclosure and secrecy in different domains. Adolescents were seen as more obligated to disclose prudential issues and less obligated to disclose personal than moral, conventional, and multifaceted issues; parents viewed adolescents as more obligated to disclose to parents than adolescents perceived they to be. Adolescents disclosed more to mothers than to fathers, particularly regarding personal issues, but mothers overestimated girl's disclosure. Greater trust, perceived obligations to disclose, and, for personal issues, more parental acceptance and psychological control predicted more disclosure and less secrecy.

METHODOLOGY

For the study, 80 adolescents (40 males and 40 females) were selected from the district Anantnag of Kashmir valley through random sampling technique and the tool used for collection of data was Parent-Child Relationship Scale (PCRS) developed by Rao (1989). The scale consisted of 100 items categorized into ten dimensions namely, protecting, symbolic punishment, rejecting, object punishment, demanding, indifferent, symbolic reward, loving, and

object reward and neglecting, describing ways that fathers and mothers act towards their children. Each respondent scored the tool for both mother and father separately. Respondents were asked to read each statement carefully and think how well it described the behavior of their father's and mother's towards them. After the required information was gathered, the data was carefully analyzed and interpreted. In order to quantify the data, the data was coded and analyzed using t-test.

RESULTS

On analyzing Table 1, it was found that there was no significant difference in fathers and mothers protecting dimension between their male and female children. Also it was found that overall both parents do not show any significant difference in protecting levels when compared with their male and female children.

Table 1: t-test analysis of protecting variable (father, mother and overall) and gender

Variable	Gender	Mean $\pm$ sd	df	t-value
Protecting (Mother)	Male	38.26 $\pm$ 5.908	78	1.859 ^{NS}
	Female	35.41 $\pm$ 7.688		
Protecting (Father)	Male	36.56 $\pm$ 5.823	78	1.774 ^{NS}
	Female	34.04 $\pm$ 6.842		
Protecting (Total)	Male	74.83 $\pm$ 15.262	158	1.982 ^{NS}
	Female	69.45 $\pm$ 18.882		

n=80

NS=Non Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2 reveals that both mothers and fathers show highly significant difference in the use of symbolic punishment between their male and female children. Overall both parents show significant difference as far as use of symbolic punishment is concerned.

Table 2 : t-test analysis of symbolic punishment variable (father, mother and overall) and gender

Variable	Gender	Mean $\pm$ sd	df	t-value
Symbolic Punishment (Mother)	Male	34.40 $\pm$ 6.121	78	3.619 ^{**}
	Female	29.87 $\pm$ 5.021		
Symbolic Punishment (Father)	Male	35.43 $\pm$ 5.724	78	3.736 ^{**}
	Female	30.37 $\pm$ 6.373		
Symbolic Punishment (Total)	Male	69.83 $\pm$ 15.690	158	4.598 [*]
	Female	58.79 $\pm$ 14.664		

n=80

^{**}=significant at 0.01 level

^{*}= significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 shows that mothers show significant difference on rejecting dimension between their male and female children. The table also reveals a highly significant difference in fathers rejecting dimension between their male and female children. Further the table also shows that overall both parents show highly significant difference on rejecting dimension between their male and female children.

Table 3: t-test analysis of rejecting variable (father, mother and overall) and gender

Variable	Gender	Mean $\pm$ sd	df	t-value
Rejecting (Mother)	Male	33.06 $\pm$ 6.982	78	2.388 [*]
	Female	28.87 $\pm$ 8.623		
Rejecting (Father)	Male	33.73 $\pm$ 6.612	78	3.118 ^{**}
	Female	28.33 $\pm$ 8.733		
Rejecting (Total)	Male	65.96 $\pm$ 17.234	158	2.763 ^{**}
	Female	57.20 $\pm$ 22.520		

n=80

^{**}= significant at 0.01 level

^{*}= significant at 0.05 level

NS= Non Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4 shows that mothers show highly significant difference in loving their male and female children. No significant difference for fathers on loving dimension was found when compared between their male and female children. Further table shows that overall both parents show highly significant difference between their male and female children on loving dimension. The results obtained in this paper are in agreement with the previous studies by Collins and Laursen (2004), Steinberg (2005) and Radziszewska et al. (1996).

Table 4: t-test analysis of loving variable (father, mother and overall) and gender

Variable	Gender	Mean $\pm$ sd	df	t-value
Loving (Mother)	Male	37.13 $\pm$ 6.224	78	3.294 ^{**}
	Female	32.25 $\pm$ 7.004		
Loving (Father)	Male	35.93 $\pm$ 5.998	78	1.878 ^{NS}
	Female	33.62 $\pm$ 4.954		
Loving (Total)	Male	73.06 $\pm$ 14.980	158	3.012 ^{**}
	Female	66.16 $\pm$ 13.980		

n=80

^{**}= significant at 0.01 level

NS= Non Significant at 0.05 level

DISCUSSION

The results show that overall both parents do not show any significant difference in protecting levels when compared with their male

and female children. This might be due to the fact that nowadays most of the fathers like mothers indulge themselves in child rearing and actively participate in the welfare of the child, so children feel equally secured in presence of both the parents. The great majority of parents have positive and nurturing relationships with their children (Steinberg 2005). In fact, findings from research show that parents and their adolescent children generally have close emotional ties (Collins and Luarsen 2004). These findings run counter to anecdotal portrayals of parents as clueless and unconnected, especially when it comes to relating to their adolescent children. Recently released parent reported data from the 2003 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), which has a very large, nationally representative sample, provide a window into parent-child relationships by children's specific ages. Child Trends drew on these data to look at three markers of these relationships for parents living with children between the ages of 6 and 17: parent-child closeness, the degree to which parents share ideas and talk about things that really matter with their children, and parents' acquaintance with their children's friends. The analysis show that although some declines are seen in these areas as children get older, high parental involvement and positive parent-child interactions endure throughout childhood into the teenage years for most adolescents.

Also it was found that both mothers and fathers show highly significant difference in the use of symbolic punishment between their male and female children. This may be attributed to the fact that male adolescents tend to be more aggressive than female ones, so parents very often make use of symbolic as well as object punishment for boys than girls. The table also shows that overall both parents show significant difference as for as use of symbolic punishment is concerned, the reasons for this may be that mothers are not as tough as fathers and they very often do not make use of any kind of punishment as compared to fathers.

Parents show significant difference on loving dimension between their male and female children. This may be attributed to the fact that as male adolescents are more likely to become delinquents so parents enforce strict discipline so that they can have complete control over their children, with the result children feel rejected

and they move away from their parents finding solace in the company of their friends. Overall both parents show highly significant difference between their male female children on loving dimension. This may be due to the fact that in a conservative society daughters are still looked as liability, no doubt their position has improved a lot but still parents usually treat their sons more warmly and affectionately as compared to their daughters. Radziszewska et al. (1996) conducted a study regarding parenting styles and several demographic factors, such as gender and ethnicity. In this study involving 3,993 ninth-grade students, the researchers found a significant relation between gender and parenting styles, such that boys were more likely than girls to have more permissive parents. In addition, they found significant ethnic differences among parenting styles. National Survey of Children's Health (2003) found that most parents reported close bonds with their children, communicated with their children about important topics, and were acquainted with most of their children's friends. These findings are apparent even among parents of adolescent children (ages 12-17), who are often presumed to feel distant from their children. Data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth also showed positive parent-child relationships for a smaller sample of adolescent respondents. Given the importance of positive communication and relationships for parents and for children of all ages, these findings are reassuring. The findings also suggest that a minority of parents could use help in strengthening their relationships with their children.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that majority of the adolescents (both male and female) share a smooth relationship with both the parents, contrary to the old view according to which as adolescents mature, they detach themselves from parents and move into the world of autonomy apart from parents. Although some autonomy is inevitable yet for most of the adolescents parents serve as important attachment figures, resources and support systems. In the majority of families parent-adolescent conflict is moderate rather than severe and that every day negotiations and minor disputes are normal, serving the positive development function of promoting independence and identity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Smooth relationship of adolescents with parents is very important. Following suggestions which may be helpful for improving relationship between adolescents and parents are as follows:

- i. Counseling services should be provided to both parents and teachers so that the transition is smooth from childhood to adolescents.
- ii. Parents should spend quality time with their children.

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