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AUTHORS:

1. Arti Kumari

   Research Scholar, Department of Human Development and Family Studies

   College of Home Science, G.B.P.U.A.T., Pantnagar

2. Dr. Ritu Singh

   Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies

   College of Home Science, G.B.P.U.A.T., Pantnagar

3. Manisha Mehra

   Research Scholar, Department of Human Development and Family Studies

   College of Home Science, G.B.P.U.A.T., Pantnagar

4. Dr. Amit.Kr. Mishra

   Assistant Professor, Amity School of Business, Amity University, Noida

Parent-Adolescent Relationship in context of Gender of Adolescents and Social Class of Families: A case study of GBPUAT, Uttarakhand

Arti Kumari, Ritu Singh, Manisha Mehra and Amit Kumar Mishra

Abstract

The present study investigated gender differences in adolescents' perceptions of parent-adolescent relationship among families (Class I, Class II, Class III, and Class IV) of G.B Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar, Uttarakhand across their gender. Families falling under social class I of the university had parent(s) working as Professor and Associate Professor in the university; those falling under social class II had parent(s) working as Assistant Professor or equivalent and Doctor in the university; those falling under social class III had parent(s) working as Accountant, Supervisor, Lab Technician and Clerk in the university and those falling under social class IV had parent(s) working as Attendant, Driver, Peon, CRC laborer, Gardner and Sweeper. In the present study, forty adolescents were randomly selected from each social class of which 63 were girls and 97 boys making a total of 160 respondents. Respondents from each socio- economic class were split across gender to analyze difference in perception of their relationship with parents. Parent-child Relationship Scale (PCRS) by Dr Nalini Rao (1989) was administered with the adolescents. The present findings revealed interesting gender variations in parent–adolescent relationship across four social classes of families under study. Boys and girls both, from all the social classes reported no gender difference in their parents' practice of symbolic punishment. On the contrary, in comparison to boys, girls from all the social classes of families reported their parents, mother and father both, to be significantly more protecting. Second striking observation was that boys and girls from social class I, II and III reported no gender based parental (mother and father) differential attitude on symbolic reward, loving, object reward, rejecting, object punishment, demanding, indifferent and neglecting domains of parent-adolescent relationship. However, girls from social class IV perceived their parents to be significantly more rejecting, indifferent and neglecting and mothers in particular to be more demanding and practicing object punishment. Whereas, boys from social class IV reported parents to be significantly more symbolically rewarding, loving and object rewarding and fathers in particular to be more demanding and practicing object punishment.

Keywords- demanding, object reward, protecting, symbolic punishment, symbolic reward

Introduction:

Parents play a remarkable role in holistic development of the child. The emotional tie and intimacy between parents and their children give a sense of security to the children and help in the development of a positive reciprocative relationship. Parent-adolescent relationship plays a key role in determining mental health and psychological well being of the adolescent. However, Videon (2005) stresses that this impact has been largely overlooked

as compared to other influential sources. Adolescence is a very critical stage in human life span. The process of developing autonomy and independence begins with the infant's discovery of self, continues throughout childhood and becomes the spotlight of adolescence. This leads to changes in parent-adolescent relationships. At the same time, a certain level of parent-child disagree in families with adolescents is seen as a necessary part of the process of establishing independence, and the occurrence of parent-child conflict might not necessarily be defined as creating a negative socialization environment (Formoso et al. 2000). Adolescents spend less time with their parent, they focus increasingly on peers and activities outside the family (Brown, 2004). Many theories, such as neo-psychoanalytic outlooks, evolutionary viewpoints, and socio-cognitive viewpoints, suggest that the increasing autonomy and individuation during adolescence lead to an impermanent decrease in closeness, an increase in conflicts, and gradually more equal authority (Collins and Laursen, 2004; Youniss and Smollar, 1985).

There are various ways in which parenting styles have been conceptualized and understood on the basis of love, responsiveness, demand, neglect and control (Coolahan et al., 2002). Kajal and Kaur (2001) in their study revealed that sons in contrast to daughters perceived parents to be more demanding and giving more object punishment. On the other hand, daughters in contrast to sons perceived their fathers to be more protecting and mothers to be more loving and symbolic reward giving. Results of a study by Sangwan (2002) reported that boys perceived their parents to be over protective whereas girls reported high parental acceptance. Kaur and Kalaram (2004) reported that fathers were significantly higher in favor of punishment to their sons as compared to their daughters and the mothers were more loving towards their son. Videon (2005) suggested that mothers distribute a close relationship with their children, where as father child relationships are oriented more toward freedom activities. In their study, Ravi and Rayalu (2007) observed that boys perceived their mothers to be authoritarian whereas girls perceived their mothers to be permissive. In case of value orientation boys perceived mothers approach as permissive while girls perceived mothers to be dictatorial. Rai *et al* (2009) revealed that boys reported significantly more negative responses from father as compared to girls and girls showed significantly better emotional tenderness in comparison to boys. The boys and girls reported no significant difference in over protection and support with father. No reliable difference was determined between boys and girls in

rejection, emotional warmth, over protection and support with mother. Parental behaviors were most likely to produce desired outcomes if and when they were perceived similarly by children and parents (Tein et al., 1994). According to Singh et al (2007), adolescents who perceived parental behavior as loving developed good personality and good social contact more outgoing, more intelligent, emotionally stable, tender minded, competitive whereas who perceived parental behavior as rejecting/neglecting developed personality like reserved, less intelligent, shy in nature, serious, timid etc. A research such as by Leaper et al (1998) suggests that verbal communication is gendered with parents tending to talk differently to girls and boys. However, there are also a large number of recent studies that do not find evidence for parents' gender-differentiated use of control (Chen et al, 2001; Eddy et al, 2001). A study by Bhaskar and Komal (2015) indicated that mothers were more protective than fathers towards adolescent boys.

Above discussion clearly reflects contrasting findings on parent-adolescent relationship with gender. Secondly, how gender differentiation in parent-adolescent relationship varies with social classes is least studied. Thus, present study has been taken up with following objectives:

- To explore gender differences in adolescents' perception of their relationship with mother in families from different social classes of G.B.P.U.A& T., Pantnagar
- To assess gender differences in adolescents' perception of their relationship with father in families from different social classes of G.B.P.U.A& T., Pantnagar

Methodology

Locale

The present research study was carried out exclusively in G.B Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar. Out of the eight schools running in the university, only five schools viz; Campus School, Government Girls Inter College (GGIC), Pantnagar Inter College (PIC), Balnilyam Junior School, Saraswati Shishu Mandir were purposively selected as a research base for the present study since they provided education up to intermediate.

Sample

Adolescents studying in 7-9 standards of the selected schools were listed and categorized under four groups on the basis of their family social class namely Class I, Class II, Class III, and Class IV. Social class of a family was based on parents' working

status in the university namely Social Class I: - Professor and Associate Professor; Social Class II:-Assistant Professor or equivalent, Doctor; Social Class III:-Accountant, Supervisor, Lab Technician, Clerk; Social Class IV:-Attendant, Driver, Peon, CRC labourer, Gardner, Sweeper. In the present study, forty adolescents were randomly selected from each social class of which 63 were girls and 97 boys making a total of 160 respondents.

Research tools

Parent-adolescent interaction was analyzed using the "Parent Child Relationship Scale" (PCRS) by Dr Nalini Rao (1989).The tool contains 100 items categorized into ten dimension relation namely: Protective (PR), Symbolic punishment (SP), Rejecting (REJ), Object punishment (OP), Demanding (DEM), Indifferent (IND), Symbolic reward (SR), Loving (LOV), Objects reward (OR) and Neglecting (NEG).

Data Collection

Prior permission to contact respondents of the present study in the school itself was sought from principals of the selected schools. Thereafter, randomly selected respondents were approached and their consent for participation in the study was obtained. Respondents were administered research tools assuring confidentiality of their responses and expectation of their honest response on it.

Results and Discussion

The present findings revealed interesting gender variations in parent–adolescent relationship across four social classes of families under study. Boys and girls both, from all the social classes reported no gender difference in their parents' practice of symbolic punishment. On the contrary, in comparison to boys, girls from all the social classes of families reported their parents, mother and father both, to be significantly more protecting. Second striking observation was that boys and girls from social class I, II and III reported no gender based parental (mother and father) differential attitude on symbolic reward, loving, object reward, rejecting, object punishment, demanding, indifferent and neglecting domains of parent-adolescent relationship. However, girls from social class IV perceived their parents to be significantly more rejecting, indifferent and neglecting and mothers in particular to be more demanding and practicing object punishment. Whereas, boys from social class IV reported parents to be significantly more symbolically rewarding, loving

and object rewarding and fathers in particular to be more demanding and practicing object punishment.

Protecting means safeguarding or shielding someone against damage, injury, criticism, hurt or danger. The parents are more protective of their daughters than sons in all social classes. The probable reason for this might be that the parents consider sons to be biologically stronger and capable of defending themselves in adverse situations than their daughters. Girls in contrast to boys are more tender minded, sensitive and thus are perceived as more vulnerable to getting easily hurt. Moreover in recent times, the incidences of assaults, shaming and so on against girls have increased which adds to parental fear for their daughters to be subject to such crimes. Manhas *et al.* (2014) reported that parenting by both fathers as well as mothers varied significantly according to the sex of their adolescent, as with daughters they were more protecting but with sons they were more punishing and strict. Earlier research has shown that parents are generally more worried about their daughters than about their sons, and this has been disagreed to be an essential reason why girls are also more controlled by parents (Junger Tas et al. 2004). A study by Shaban and Mattoo (2012) reported no significant difference was found when protecting dimension was compared to the gender of the adolescent.

Symbolic Punishment is achieved through labeling or stigmatizing certain actions or qualities as unsociable, deviant or objectionable. The concept of time out is a major example of symbolic punishment. No gender difference was seen in this domain of parent-adolescent relationship. The probable reason for this might be that the parents from social classes I,II and III know ways to acknowledge child's feelings. The parents of these social classes are comparatively much educated with broader intellect to use symbolic punishment as opportunity to the child to help him regulate his emotions and reconnect with positive state of mind. However, in social class IV, no gender difference seen on this component might be because the culture is more of object punishment not symbolic punishment. The parents of this social class juggling over fulfilling day to day requirements of the family do not have energy and patience to understand that misconduct by children may sometimes be acts of expression of lack of connect in parent-child relationship. They sometimes fail to understand that strong parent-child bonding instead of blaming and judging is the key to help children follow parental lead. Sharma (2012) also indicated that girls and boys differ significantly in their symbolic punishment and object

punishment areas of the mother-child relationship. Boys in contrast to girls reported mothers to be significantly more symbolically punitive and object punitive.

Symbolic Reward is expression of appreciation in the form of love, care, affection and acceptance towards the child for acting in an adequate socially approved manner. Appreciation is acknowledgment not based on evaluation, but based on the intrinsic trait of the person. No gender difference was seen in social class I,II and III in this domain of parent-adolescent relationship. However, in social class IV, boys in contrast to girls reported parents to be more symbolically rewarding. The probable reason for this might be that parents of social class IV have more acceptance for boys because they consider girls a burden. Therefore, modest achievement of boys is cherished whereas, accomplishment of girls in any field is not duly acknowledged.

Love refers to the degree of expression of fondness, trust, devoted attachment and care shown to the child. Girls and boys of social classes I, II and III reported no gender difference in love from parents. This is probably because parents of these social classes value and are appreciative of distinctive qualities of both the genders. Whereas, boys in comparison to girls of social class IV reported parents to be more loving probably because of preference for boys over girls. Serbin et al (1990) reported that lower-SES families show more gender-differentiated parenting than middle-class families. However a study by Wadker and Palasane (1987) concluded in their study that girls are satisfied with parent-child relationship than boys. ==Meraj (1983) in her study also mentioned that upper middle class mothers were warmer and demonstrative and children revealed positive attitude towards their parental treatment.==

Object Reward refers to physical, tangible, concrete action of warmth for emotional, psychological security of a child. It indicates the parent's acceptance of the child. Girls and boys of social class I, II and III reported no gender difference in object reward by parents. The probable reason might be that parents of these social classes try to put equal efforts and investments in terms of material, time, energy and so on irrespective of gender so that the children might not feel resentment and jealousy with one another. This is one example of effective parenting. Whereas, in social class IV boys in comparison to girls reported parents to be more object rewarding probably because parents of this social class perceive boys to be their rightful heir, carry forward family's name and is expected to care for them in their old age..

Object punishment refers to the act by which parents show their temporary annoyance and anger with the child by using physical means. Girls and boys of social class I,II and III reported no gender difference in object punishment by parents probably because in these classes parents don't deem corporal punishment as necessary for disciplining the child. A study by Imam (2004) reported that girls of middle class families are more obedient as compared to upper class families. According to Zolotor et al (2011) over the past 30 years, public support for corporal punishment has declined sharply in terms of parents' actual use of physical discipline. On the contrary, in social class IV boys in contrast to girls reported fathers to be more object punitive and girls in contrast to boys reported mothers to be objectively punitive. Usually, in social class IV fathers exert more control over boys because they do not recognize girls as permanent family asset. Whereas, mothers are objectively more punitive towards girls because in this social class, mothers are often singled out as being solely responsible for transferring values, customs, and so on to girls. Straus and Stewart (1999) in their study reported that lower socioeconomic status (SES) parents spank and use other forms of physical discipline more often than higher SES parents, whereas higher SES families are more likely than their lower SES counterparts to use discipline strategies that include reasoning and promote child autonomy (Steinberg et al, 1991). Biosocial theory by Wood and Eagly (2012) proposes that parental control of girls is characterized by kindness, consideration of others' perspectives, empathy, and interpersonal closeness (e.g., using autonomy-supportive strategies), whereas parental control of boys is characterized by power, assertiveness, aggressiveness, and dominance (e.g., using controlling strategies). Results of the study by Bagga and Saini (2017) revealed that sons in contrast to daughters perceived parents to be more demanding and giving more object punishment. On the other hand, daughters in contrast to sons perceived their fathers to be more protecting and mothers to be more loving and symbolic reward giving. Adolescents perceived their mothers more symbolically punitive as well as more loving towards them than their fathers. Also, sons perceived their mothers to be more protecting and less neglecting than their fathers. According to Jahangir and Tahir (1999) in the lower socioeconomic status, the level of warmth is lower and degree of control is reported as higher by children. Sharma (2012) in her study stated that boys scored significantly higher on object punishment than girls.

Demanding the behavior of making others work hard or meet high standards, not easily satisfied and self is focused more. Girls and boys of social classes I, II and III reported no difference in demanding domain of their parent-adolescent relationship. Parents of these social classes put equal efforts in proving for developmental needs of children of both genders, so they are equally demanding, and responsive towards their needs. On the contrary, in social class IV boys in contrast to girls reported fathers to be more demanding and girls in comparison to boys reported mothers to be more demanding. The probable reason behind this is related to accomplishing expected gender roles. Either parent is demanding of meeting expected standards of their respective chores.

Indifferent is having no preference or being uninterested. Neglect is the expression of avoidance, rude behavior and less concern shown to the person. Neglect encompasses desertion, lack of adequate guidance and direction, unable to cater essential developmental needs; and failure to provide necessary education, medical care, nourishment, shelter, and/or clothing. The probable reason for neglect and indifference in parental attitude towards girls in social class IV might be lack of education, awareness and parenting skills. The parents of this social class have deep rooted gender stereotypes in their minds affecting their ways of dealing with emotional and psychological needs of the girl child. The girls are often denied of the right to have a voice and speak up for themselves, and be recognized. Rejecting is behavior evident in rejecting the child in aversion. This nature indicated in being disdainful and in outright refusal of the child. Sinha and Mishra (2007) found that parental acceptance was positively related with control, intimacy and admiration whereas rejection was positively related with conflict. The probable reason for parents of social class IV to be rejecting towards girls might be that they consider the girl child a burden rather than responsibility. This social class has a cultural preference for boys. Parents of this social class might posit that as girls grow up, their rearing requires additional responsibilities of care and safeguarding thereby causing financial burden to the family reserves which could have been used for something which is considered an investment. Results of a study by Collins and Russell (1991) showed that girls report that they have more conflicts with their parents than boys, although having conflicts with parents was only found to be associated with offending for boys. Further, the girls reported being more closely monitored than the boys. Findings of the study by Bhatti and Khoso

Conclusion:

Gender differences were more prominently seen in social class IV where girls in contrast to boys perceived their parents to be significantly more neglecting, rejecting, and indifferent towards them. On the contrary, boys from this social class reported parents to be significantly more symbolically rewarding, loving and object rewarding. It is evident that social class plays a major role in moderating the effect of adolescent's gender in parental attitude. The most obvious reason behind it might be that in families with low SES boys are much more celebrated than girls. Socio economic status serves as an intervening variable that contributes to unique influences on gender based differences in parent-adolescent relationship.

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Table 1: Gender differences in adolescents' perception of their relationship with mother in families from different social classes of G.B.P.U.A&T., Pantnagar

Mother-adolescent relationship	Social Class I (n_1=40)			Social Class II (n_2=40)			Social Class III (n_3=40)			Social Class IV (n_4=40)		
	Girls (n_{1a}=20)	Boys (n_{2a}=20)	Z	Girls (n_{1b}=18)	Boys (n_{2b}=22)	Z	Girls (n_{1c}=11)	Boys (n_{2c}=29)	Z	Girls (n_{1d}=14)	Boys (n_{2d}=26)	Z
	Mean (S.D)	Mean (S.D)		Mean (S.D)	Mean (S.D)		Mean (S.D)	Mean (S.D)		Mean (S.D)	Mean (S.D)	
Positive domains												
Protecting	45.35 (24.04)	41.95 (24.20)	**2.97***	45.26 (26.86)	41.92 (20.57)	**2.90****	41.37 (20.08)	38.00 (18.90)	**1.98***	37.64 (18.81)	35.77 (17.08)	**1.96***
Symbolic Punishment	33.85 (17.90)	34.57 (17.57)	1.36	33.45 (17.57)	35.50 (18.07)	1.69	28.00 (14.08)	30.00 (15.05)	1.09	26.50 (12.98)	27.33 (15.08)	1.79
Symbolic Reward	43.20 (23.05)	43.80 (21.06)	1.88	45.03 (22.86)	45.52 (22.96)	0.93	33.90 (16.98)	34.02 (17.97)	1.76	17.14 (8.08)	27.55 (13.22)	2.93**
Loving	39.75 (19.87)	39.99 (20.41)	1.27	39.38 (19.06)	40.12 (21.86)	1.03	36.35 (18.08)	37.10 (20.98)	1.50	36.21 (19.48)	45.67 (22.37)	3.43**
Object Reward	37.95 (18.26)	38.70 (19.03)	1.24	37.22 (18.33)	38.65 (19.97)	1.51	29.45 (14.98)	30.65 (15.02)	1.08	14.50 (7.28)	20.25 (10.08)	3.17**
Negative domains												
Rejecting	17.40 (8.98)	18.48 (9.79)	1.82	17.45 (8.78)	18.50 (9.26)	1.89	19.52 (9.81)	20.00 (11.08)	1.67	37.00 (18.89)	31.00 (15.84)	3.72**
Object punishment	18.75 (9.02)	19.90 (12.06)	1.41	18.77 (9.31)	19.90 (10.87)	1.29	19.14 (9.41)	20.72 (11.90)	1.13	39.36 (18.39)	33.30 (16.41)	3.29**
Demanding	34.94 (16.50)	35.18 (17.10)	1.09	33.87 (16.90)	34.15 (17.10)	1.38	29.45 (15.90)	30.74 (16.38)	1.72	28.34 (13.20)	22.55 (11.25)	3.99**
Indifferent	23.45 (12.80)	22.40 (11.22)	1.27	28.85 (14.40)	27.53 (13.25)	1.13	38.27 (19.10)	37.79 (17.40)	1.07	38.37 (19.18)	32.92 (15.42)	3.09**
Neglecting	25.80 (12.90)	26.46 (13.20)	1.49	25.83 (12.89)	26.58 (14.27)	1.53	29.17 (15.08)	30.82 (16.05)	1.47	35.50 (17.30)	23.00 (11.90)	4.09**

Significance at **p<0.01 and *p<.05 level of significance

Table 2: Gender differences in adolescents' perception of their relationship with father in families from different social classes of G.B.P.U.A&T., Pantnagar

Father-adolescent relationship	Social Class I (n_1=40)			Social Class II (n_2=40)			Social Class III (n_3=40)			Social Class IV (n_4=40)		
	Girls (n_{1a}=20)	Boys (n_{2a}=20)	Z	Girls (n_{1b}=18)	Boys (n_{2b}=22)	Z	Girls (n_{1c}=11)	Boys (n_{2c}=29)	Z	Girls (n_{1d}=14)	Boys (n_{2d}=26)	Z
	Mean (S.D)	Mean (S.D)		Mean (S.D)	Mean (S.D)		Mean (S.D)	Mean (S.D)		Mean (S.D)	Mean (S.D)	
Positive domains												
Protecting	47.54 (21.08)	41.90 (20.98)	**2.09****	47.50 (23.57)	41.81 (21.83)	**2.71****	40.95 (20.57)	37.10 (18.03)	**2.06****	36.35 (18.97)	34.00 (17.07)	**1.99***
Symbolic Punishment	41.50 (20.90)	42.90 (21.97)	1.14	41.21 (20.56)	43.90 (21.96)	1.09	37.17 (18.99)	37.90 (19.94)	1.69	16.33 (8.26)	17.45 (9.23)	1.08
Symbolic Reward	40.85 (20.89)	41.63 (21.36)	0.93	40.59 (20.31)	41.10 (21.01)	1.24	34.58 (17.42)	35.38 (17.29)	1.09	15.38 (7.40)	18.42 (9.21)	**2.05****
Loving	39.95 (19.47)	40.09 (20.04)	1.07	39.75 (19.37)	40.15 (21.33)	0.43	39.74 (19.37)	40.01 (21.89)	1.07	38.31 (19.15)	40.07 (20.87)	**1.97***
Object Reward	36.25 (18.13)	37.70 (18.86)	0.94	40.59 (20.08)	41.10 (20.91)	1.24	34.58 (17.28)	35.38 (17.11)	1.06	25.38 (12.22)	34.42 (17.29)	**5.05****
Negative domains												
Rejecting	20.00 (10.48)	19.98 (8.96)	0.75	21.58 (10.35)	20.44 (9.23)	1.09	31.00 (16.05)	30.90 (14.46)	1.36	39.00 (19.95)	31.00 (15.58)	**5.04****
Object punishment	18.85 (9.01)	19.85 (9.99)	1.24	18.88 (9.91)	19.88 (10.54)	1.70	25.98 (12.98)	26.78 (13.91)	1.08	28.30 (14.01)	33.30 (16.90)	**4.84****
Demanding	34.95 (16.99)	35.45 (17.81)	1.36	34.82 (17.49)	35.98 (18.05)	1.02	27.31 (13.95)	28.31 (14.05)	1.19	21.65 (11.49)	28.55 (15.25)	**3.05****
Indifferent	21.84 (10.15)	20.63 (9.59)	1.28	24.99 (13.25)	24.08 (12.91)	1.39	32.84 (17.95)	32.00 (16.05)	1.46	34.92 (17.45)	32.92 (16.59)	**1.99***
Neglecting	18.50 (9.44)	18.80 (9.93)	1.05	18.46 (9.26)	18.66 (9.47)	1.31	22.00 (11.06)	19.17 (9.66)	1.71	29.00 (15.56)	23.00 (11.99)	**2.71****

Significance at **$p<0.01$ and *$p<.05$ level of significance