

Relationship of Perceived Parenting Styles and Behavioral Systems Among Generations

Tiana Saha¹, Geetika Kamde², Shalini Kommaddi³, Kuhu Bakilwal⁴

^{1,2,3,4}SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, India

Abstract

Adolescence is a period of change and reorganization in family relationships. The parent-adolescent relationship changes from the relation of authority into a more equal relation and this process relates to temporal deterioration in the family relationships (Gurba et al., 2019). Numerous changes occur in parent-child relationships during adolescence. Adolescents are spending less time with their families and more time with their classmates and extracurricular activities. Many ideas suggest that as adolescents become more autonomous and individuated, there is a transitory decrease in closeness, a rise in conflicts, and a progressive shift toward more equal power (De Goede et al., 2008). Communication with adolescents and parents about potential enrollment for various activities needs to account for their differing perspectives and approaches (Tsevat et al., 2018).

The study aims to determine parental-adolescent relationship effects on adolescent behavior. Questionnaires were conducted to find out how behavioral changes from the past affected the positive and negative interactions parents have with their adolescents. The questionnaire used was the Network of Relationship Inventory - Behavioral Systems Version (Furman & Buhrmester, 2009) and the Perceived Parenting Styles Scale (Manikandan, 2013).

A total sample size of 120 participants in the study, were three generations of 40 families from the Indian subcontinent. The adolescents (born in 2008 – 2003) were asked to complete the questionnaire, followed by their parents (born in 1964 – 1984), and grandparents (born in 1944-1964) respectively. The results revealed that the changes in attitudes of parents have changed to authoritative since earlier generations. High scores in positive interaction scales have resulted in adolescents of today more likely to seek secure base and provide a secure base as compared to their counterpart parents and grandparents.

Keywords: Parents, Adolescents, Grandparents, Well-being, Parenting style

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical period for mental health because many mental disorders show onset during and directly following this developmental period. It is during this fragile time that a guiding force - often seen in the form of a parent, or parental figure - helps shape the view of the adolescent with their adaptation to the world around them. Mental health experts have long since debated whether the existence of abnormal behavior is a response to the nurture versus nature debate. Studying the relationship of parents considered close to the adolescent can show how their intimacy may affect their mental health.

1.1 Emergence of Relationship Influences

The mental health of adolescents today has changed drastically as compared to their grandparents because

of the amount of information available to their parents. The parent–adolescent relationship has been a classic research topic, and researchers have found that parenting styles (e.g., authoritative, authoritarian) are closely related to various qualities of parent-adolescent relationships (e.g., cohesion, conflict). Variations in parenting styles and parent-child relationship qualities are long-standing research topics in developmental and family psychology. (Darling and Steinberg, 1993).

Parenting style is defined as an emotional context inside the family where parents express their attitudes, certain behaviors, and practices toward the child, making use of a specific tone of voice, body language, and emotional expression (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). In the 1960s, psychologist Diana Baumrind identified three main styles of parenting: authoritarian, authoritative and permissive – the effect of whose we have studied on the three generations (Jessup, 2024b).

Authoritarian Parenting

This style is often described as dictatorial and overbearing. These parents expect to be obeyed without giving a reason. Rules are strict, with no room for interpretation, compromise, or discussion. Punishments for violating rules are severe. In this kind of household, children are rarely given a say in their own lives and are expected instead to obey whatever they’re told to do without question. Punishments are often used to ensure obedience, and affection is given sparingly if at all. This approach can have damaging consequences to a child that can follow them into adulthood. In addition to the above, authoritarian parenting doesn’t appear to instill lasting lessons; as soon as the parent leaves, the child will often act out. They’ll also often seek guidance from someone other than their parents.

Authoritative Parenting

This style provides a balance between structure and independence, allowing a child to grow within reasonable boundaries and explore their abilities. Parents using this style will set strict standards which they expect their children to abide by but also support them by providing an emotionally caring environment that fosters trust. This style can be described as “tough but fair” or “firm but nurturing.” A child has room to make mistakes and the freedom to make them without judgement within a structure that provides guidance.

Permissive Parenting

The extreme opposite of the authoritarian parenting style, permissive parents let their children do what they want and don’t implement rules or structure that might disappoint or upset the child. Descriptions of this style often have the parent trying to act more as a peer or friend to their child, giving in to their wants almost immediately. This can be the result of that parent growing up with an authoritarian parenting style in their own household and not wanting to put their child through it. Being responsive to a child’s needs is great, but the lack of structure and limits can have negative affects long-term.

Previous studies have revealed that parenting styles are correlated with adolescents’ self-esteem, drug and alcohol use, delinquency, and academic performance. It is challenging to sustain effective parenting styles, and parents often report that living with teenagers is stressful. Although adolescents often resist, parental monitoring of the adolescent’s daily life still consistently predicts a favorable adjustment. For example, parental monitoring is linked to positive outcomes that include a reduction in sexual activity and delinquency. In addition, an ideal parenting style would improve the school performance and mental health status of their children (Tam et al., 2013).

1.2 Objectives of this study

There has been minimal research providing evidence of parental style and evolutionary evidence in response to the conflict-cohesion status of parent-adolescent relationships (Bi et al., 2018). The purpose

of our study has been to attempt to fill in the gaps by providing reported evidence that changes in parental style, especially from three generations ago can help better the mental health of a new generation. There exist studies that analyze the relationship between perceived parenting style and adolescents' relationship with their parents. There have been few longitudinal studies conducted to note the perceived parenting style and behavioral systems of generations of adolescents. Our study is unique in that it asks us to pull from the memory of grandparents and parents. It studies generational differences without the limitations of time and standardization of tests over time.

1. To determine the relationship between parenting style and behavioral systems among generations.
2. To interpret the perceived parenting style of three generations of adolescents using the Perceived Parenting Style Scale (Manikandan, 2020)
3. To determine the root cause of the detrimental impact of parenting on their perceived mental health.

2 Methodology

The data examined was collected using a cross-sectional study method of perceived parenting styles by the adolescent when the parent was an adolescent, and when the grandparent was an adolescent. Starting 9th January 2024 to 14 February 2024, data was collected from these three groups simultaneously.

The research used in the study adopts a questionnaire method using the Network Behavioral Systems Version (NRI-BSV) based on Furman and Wehner's (1994) behavioral systems conceptualization of close relationships. The NRI-BSV is a twenty-four-item questionnaire that assesses eight features of close relationships. The feature included two new scales assessing attachment behaviors: 1) participant seeks safe haven and b) participant seeks secure base. Participants rated how much each feature occurred in each relationship using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "Never", 2 = "Rarely", 3 = "Sometimes", 4 = "Often", 5 = "Always").

The Perceived Parenting Style Scale developed by Divya and Manikandan (2013) measures the perception of the children about their parent's behavior. It measures the perceived parenting style of the subject in three dimensions such as authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. It consists of 30 items in which responses were elicited on a five-point Likert scale.

The Network of Relationships Questionnaire and Perceived Parental Styles Scale were adopted into a Google form to collect data. Participants of the study ranged from different regions of the Indian subcontinent.

2.1 Variables of Relationship Studied

The variables noted in the establishment of the close relationship of the participant with their caregiver or parent include negative interaction scales (Conflict, Criticism, Antagonism), and positive interaction scales (Seeks secure base, Seeks safe haven, Provides secure base, Provides safe haven, Companionship). Parenting styles were perceived as Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive.

2.2 Limitations of the Variables

This study has many limitations that arose during the period of data collection. The first is the presence of an existing relationship with grandparents – certain prospective participants were unable to take part in the study due to the death of both maternal and paternal grandparents as well as family estrangement. The digital survey method of data collection presented an obstacle, with the medium of questioning affecting the amount of data collected. The socioeconomic status of the family was a variable that limited the questioning.

2.3 Procedure

The participating adolescents were recruited from various colleges for undergraduate degrees across India. Before the study, the adolescents along with their parents and grandparents received written information describing the research project and goals and explaining the right to decline participation. More than 60% of the pupils and families approached decided to participate. The questionnaires were completed in an online mode through Google Forms. Confidentiality of the responses was guaranteed. Verbal and written instructions were given. In the PPSS, the following items were reverse scored because the items were changed for ease of the participant to answer, 'Never help me in doing day-to-day activities on time', 'Never provide an atmosphere for my studies', 'Never do anything to satisfy my needs'.

3 Discussion

A study by Maria et al. showed both girls and boys felt that an authoritative type of parenting was employed by both parents, but boys perceived their parents as more authoritarian when compared to girls. In comparison to our study where both male and female adolescent participants perceived the parenting style to be the same. 14 male adolescents with more authoritative parenting style and 26 female adolescents also with more authoritarian parenting style.

4 Result

The study focused on the responses of a random sample of 120 individuals, 40 from each generation: 43 males (35.833%) and 77 females (64.167%), three age groups/generations were represented: 40 late adolescents (33.33%), on a range of 16-21 years of age, who were on average 19.12 years of age (SD= 1.784). 40 middle-aged adults (33.33%), on a range of 41-57 years of age, who were on average 47.75 years of age (SD= 4.598), and 40 older adults (33.33%), on a range of 60- 84 years of age, who were on average 65.8 years of age (SD= 7.14). The adolescent group consisted of 14 Males (35%) and 26 Females (65%), out of which 40 (100%) were single. The middle-aged group consisted of 16 Males (40%) and 24 Females (60%), out of which 40 (100%) were married. The older adult group consisted of 13 Males (32.5%) and 27 Females, (67.5%), out of which 38 (95%) were married and 2 were single (5%).

Adolescents scored an average 40.4 on the authoritative parenting style, as compared to the 39.95 scored by parents and 44.2 by grandparents. The parents scored 20.225 on the authoritarian parenting style, as compared to the 20.075 scored by adolescents and 24.275 by grandparents. Adolescents scored an average of 19.625 permissive parenting scale, while parents scored 19.2 and grandparents scored 27.175.

Adolescents scored an average of 19.45 positive interaction scale (12.95 in Seeking secure base, 12.45 in Providing secure base, 11.15 in Companionship, 10.575 in Seeking safe haven, 10.075 in Providing safe haven). They scored 14.35 in negative interaction scale (8.8 in Conflict, 6.975 in Antagonism. 6.075 in Criticism).

Parents scored an average of 19.15 positive interaction scale (12.275 in Seek secure base, 12.15 in Providing secure base, 11.45 in Seek safe haven, 10.825 in Provide safe haven, 10.15 in Companionship). They scored 13.625 on the negative interaction scale (7.925 in Conflict, 6.375 in Antagonism, 5.9 in Criticism).

Grandparents scored an average of 16.95 positive interaction scale (8.97 in Seek secure base, 9.8 in Providing secure base, 9 in Seek safe haven, 9.45 in Provide safe haven, 8.87 in Companionship). They scored 14.675 on the negative interaction scale (7.52 in Conflict, 7.25 in Antagonism, 7.25 in Criticism).

4.1 Summary

Sociocultural factors such as economic status, single or both parents working, substance abuse among parents, type of family and behavior of the head of the family, the moral character of either parent, beliefs of the family members especially grandparents, influence the type of parenting styles in an Indian system (Ramesh et al., 2022).

In India, the mother is the primary caregiver who emotionally bonds and nurtures the child, and the father is perceived to be dominant and feared (Kaker, 1978). In Indian culture, an individual's life revolves around one's family and that includes extended family as well (Seymour, 1999; Sinha, 1994). India still follows the patriarchal system. Though fathers appear to be more responsive, the onus of bringing up the child still rests on the mother. Fathers play a lesser role in the process of socialization but today with women entering the work field it is likely that one of the parents may become less involved in the parenting of the child. Results showed that there is a significant correlation between parental authority and mental health. This concludes that parenting style influences the overall mental health of adolescents. ("International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication, and Technology," 2020).

5 Conclusion

Based on the data collected and variables studied throughout this paper, we have documented the changes in the way parents have treated their children in the Indian subcontinent. An increase in providing a safe haven by encouraging healthy discussions and problem-solving techniques has made a better understanding of the mental health of adolescents of today. Adolescents scored 40.4 in authoritative parenting style, parents scored 20.225 in authoritarian and grandparents scored 27.175 in permissive.

High score indicated by the participants in the negative interaction in the sub scale conflict help us answer the objective "the cause of the detrimental impact of parenting on their perceived mental health". While perceived bad interactions were positively correlated with observed conflict, perceptions of negative interactions were inversely correlated with communication skills. There exists correlations between variations in total support and unfavorable interactions in partnerships and other individual outcomes (like depression or loneliness) or relationship outcomes (like relationship maintenance or dissolution). NRI compares the relationships between various relationships and the outcome variables since similar support and negative interaction scores are obtained for the various relationships. (Laursen & Mooney, 2008).

Although the study was initially titled a 'study of evolutionary changes', throughout the collection of data it was determined that this has merely been a provision of evidence that modern parenting style has developed from highly authoritarian to authoritative.

References

1. Chhabra, B., & Kapadia, S. V. (2022). Mental Health Policies in Queer Community: Are We Doing Enough? *Journal of Loss & Trauma*, 28(2), 182–186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2022.2068266>
2. Koziara, K., Mijas, M., Galbarczyk, A., Wycisk, J., Pliczko, M. P., Krzych-Miłkowska, K., & Grabski, B. (2022). It gets better with age: Resilience, stigma, and mental health among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons from Poland. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.958601>
3. Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological bulletin*, 129(5), 674.

4. Furman, W., & Buhrmester, D. (2009). Network of Relationships Inventory: Behavioral Systems Version (NRI-BSV) [Database record]. APA PsycTests. <https://doi.org/10.1037/t06999-000>
5. Darling, N., and Steinberg, L. (1993). Parenting style as context: an integrative model. *Psychol. Bull.* 113, 487–496. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.113.3.487
6. Bi, X., Yang, Y., Li, H., Wang, M., Zhang, W., & Deater-Deckard, K. (2018). Parenting Styles and Parent–Adolescent Relationships: The mediating roles of behavioral autonomy and Parental Authority. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02187>
7. Ramesh, N., Vijay, C., & Gonsalves, K. (2022). Parenting styles and mental health of adolescents: A cross-sectional study in South India. *Journal of Mental Health and Human Behaviour*, 0(0), 0. https://doi.org/10.4103/jmhbb.jmhbb_176_20
8. Tam, C., Chong, A., Kadirvelu, A., & Khoo, Y. (2013). Parenting Styles and Self-Efficacy of Adolescents: Malaysian scenario. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science Research*, 12. https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume12/3-Parenting-Styles-and-Self-Efficacy-of-Adolescents.pdf
9. International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology. (2020). *International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.48175/568> Kapadia, S., & Miller, J. (2005). Parent–Adolescent Relationships in the Context of Interpersonal Disagreements: View from a Collectivist Culture. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 17(1), 33-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097133360501700103>
10. Parikh R, Michelson D, Sapru M, et al. Priorities and preferences for school-based mental health services in India: a multi-stakeholder study with adolescents, parents, school staff, and mental health providers. *Global Mental Health*. 2019;6:e18. doi:10.1017/gmh.2019.16
11. Manikandan, K. (2020). Perceived parenting style scale. *Universityofcalicut*. https://www.academia.edu/42141918/Perceived_Parenting_Style_Scale
12. Jessup. (2024b, January 9). *The psychology behind different types of parenting styles*. Jessup University. <https://jessup.edu/blog/academic-success/the-psychology-behind-different-types-of-parenting-styles/#:~:text=Parenting%20styles%20vary%20from%20person,%3A%20authoritarian%2C%20authoritative%20and%20permissive>