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Quality of parent- Adolescent relationship

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate quality of parent child relationship and also find out its association with age and gender. Data were collected from 20 schools of Delhi, selected randomly. Sample comprised of 1719 students (692 girls and 1027 boys), studying in 7th (329 boys, 263 girls), 9th (320 boys, 244 girls) and 11th (378 boys, 185 girls) of selected schools. FACE IV was used to find out quality of parent child relationship. Chi-square (χ^2) values have been calculated to test independence of association hypotheses. The result revealed that gender and age are associated with quality of parent child relationship. Adolescent boys and girls have different relationship quality with parents.

Keywords: Quality of relationship, Gender difference, Age difference

1. Introduction

The parent-child relationship consists of a combination of behaviors, feelings, and expectations that are unique to a particular parent and a particular child. The period of adolescence is that phase of life when strong parent-child attachment is essential for the normal development of adolescents, both biological and psychological, but it can also be a period that is disruptive for family socialization (Granic, Dishion, Hollenstein, & Patterson, 2002; Steinberg, 1988) [2, 7]. Indeed, warm, loving and responsive parenting contributes to strengthen parent-adolescent bonds.

Adolescent's relationships with family members of the female sex are less favorable than those with male family members. Adolescent relationships with their mothers included high levels of conflict and discord (Steinberg 1990) [6]. Families are not free from gender bias when it comes to setting norms of behavior for their children, especially the moral ones. What is permissible and acceptable for the boys could be prohibited for the girls and, families continuously remind girls in many ways that they are expected to behave differently from their male siblings. In some families, certain seemingly undesirable behavior of one child is allowed to pass without any adverse reaction from the parents but a similar act of another child evokes disapproval. Some children compare the reactions of their parents to their behavior and actions with those of the parents of their peers. As a result, they may either get favorably disposed towards their parents or become indignant.

Cross-sectional studies on age-related changes in perceived parental support have reported that Adolescents power in their relationships with parents decline from pre-adolescence to early adolescence, stabilize between early and middle adolescence, and increase from middle to late adolescence (Furman and Buhrmester 1992, Helsen *et al.* 2000; Meeus *et al.* 2005) [1, 3, 4]. This stabilization was longitudinally confirmed with respect to the development of warmth (Shanahan *et al.* 2007) [5].

Keeping this in mind this study has been planned to find out quality of parent child relationship as well as age and sex related changes with following objectives-

- To assess the quality of parent child relationship
- To investigate the affect of gender and age on quality of parent child relationship

Hypothesis

Quality of relationship is independent of gender of adolescents

Quality of relationship is independent of age of adolescents

2. Methodology

Data were collected from 18 schools of New Delhi, selected randomly. Self-constructed questionnaire was distributed to students studying in 7th, 9th and 11th classes of these selected schools. Incomplete forms were screened out. A sample of 1719 adolescents (692 girls, 1027

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1027 boys) was drawn out from students studying in 7th (592), 9th (564) and 11th (563) classes of selected schools.

2.1 Tool for data collection

In order to study the quality of parent child relationship, FACE IV Questionnaire developed by Olson was used. This questionnaire is divided in to eight dimensions. Two dimensions - cohesion and flexibility, included under balanced family relationship, have been divided in to 3 categories (somewhat connected, connected and very connected). Unbalanced family relationship (including four dimensions namely; Enmeshed, Chaotic, Rigid and Disengaged), Communication and satisfaction have been divided in to 5 categories (very low, low medium, high and

very high). Chi squares were calculated separately for each dimension for age and gender. Level of significance was calculated at 0.05.

3. Result and discussion

Contingency table was prepared to categorize quality of parent-child relationship with reference to gender of adolescents, on the basis of frequencies for various dimensions. Chi χ^2 values were calculated to find out association between groups (against independence of attribute hypothesis). Following table presents gender wise distribution (frequency and χ^2 value) of adolescents for quality of parent child relationship, figures in parentheses showing percentages.

Table 1: Gender wise distribution of adolescents for quality of parent child relationship

Dimensions of relationship	Variables	somewhat connected	connected	Very connected	χ^2 value	df
Cohesion	Girls	61 (8.84)	190 (27.53)	439 (63.62)	92.78**	2
	Boys	127 (12.39)	486 (47.41)	412 (40.19)		
Flexibility	Girls	70 (10.14)	295 (42.75)	325 (47.10)	28.79**	2
	Boys	190 (18.53)	452 (44.09)	383(37.36)		

Enmeshed	Variables	very low	low	medium	high	very high	χ^2 value	df
Enmeshed	Girls	50 (7.22)	164(23.69)	233(33.67)	156(22.54)	89 (12.86)	19.75*	4
	Boys	50 (4.86)	254(24.73)	272(26.48)	272(26.48)	179(17.42)		
Chaotic	Girls	49(7.08)	106(15.31)	253(36.56)	179(25.86)	105(15.17)	9.61*	4
	Boys	76(7.40)	212(20.64)	358(34.85)	257(25.02)	124(12.07)		
Rigid	Girls	75(10.83)	159(22.97)	170(24.56)	203(29.33)	85(12.28)	32.95**	4
	Boys	80(7.78)	175(17.03)	293(28.52)	267(25.99)	212(20.64)		
Disengaged	Girls	120(17.34)	180(26.01)	188(27.16)	129(18.64)	76(10.98)	9.86*	4
	Boys	137(13.33)	311(30.28)	280(27.26)	209(20.35)	91(8.86)		
Communication	Girls	66(9.53)	58(8.38)	155(22.39)	327(31.84)	198(28.61)	54.30**	4
	Boys	115(11.19)	146(14.21)	288(28.04)	215(31.06)	151(14.70)		
Satisfaction	Girls	49(7.08)	108(15.60)	319(31.06)	174(25.14)	171(24.71)	103.31**	4
	Boys	151(14.70)	266(25.90)	191(27.60)	181(17.62)	110(10.71)		

The table illustrates that all the χ^2 values are significant hence rejecting independence of attribute hypotheses for all the dimensions of parent-child relationship. Hence, it could be concluded that families are not free from gender bias when it comes to setting quality of relationship for their children. Adolescents’ relationship with parents is different for boys and girls. In general girls display more cohesion with their parents than boys. Flexibility in relationship with parents is more for girls than their counterparts. Since these two dimensions are indicative of balanced family relationship, it shows that girls show better balanced family relationship than boys.

When boys and girls have been compared for four unbalanced family relationship aspects i.e. Enmeshed, chaotic, rigid and disengage, more percentage of boys fall under high and very high Enmeshed categories as compared to girls. Boys are on their own, more independent and get along better with people

outside their family than inside. More boys than girls fall under very low to low categories as compared to girls. They feel less connected to family members and invariably spend less time with their family members. Consequently boys get more rigid treatment and strict consequences for breaking rules of parent as compared to girls. It is also worthwhile to note that amount and quality of communication within the family and understanding each other’ feelings is better for girls. More percentage of girls are categorized high and very high for Satisfaction. Girls experience high degree of closeness, sharing and concern with family members.

Age difference in quality of parent adolescent relationship:

Following table presents class wise distribution (chi χ^2 frequency and percentage) of adolescents for quality of parent child relationship

Table 2

Dimensions of relationship	Variables	Somewhat Connected	Connected	Very Connected	χ^2 value	df
Cohesion	7 th	80 (13.55)	235(39.83)	276(46.77)	14.78*	4
	9 th	43(7.62)	240(42.55)	281(49.82)		
	11 th	65(11.58)	202(36.00)	294(52.40)		
Flexibility	7 th	130(22.03)	289(48.98)	171(28.98)	84.47**	4
	9 th	59(10.46)	264(46.80)	241(42.73)		
	11 th	71(12.65)	194(34.58)	296(52.76)		

Enmeshed		very low	low	medium	high	very high	χ^2 value	df
Enmeshed	7 th	37(6.26)	189(31.97)	135(22.84)	152(25.71)	79(13.36)	56.48**	6
	9 th	28(4.96)	122(21.63)	159(28.19)	142(25.17)	113(20.03)		
	11 th	34(6.06)	107(19.07)	212(37.78)	133(23.70)	76(13.54)		

Chaotic	7 th	49(8.29)	129(21.82)	186(31.47)	139(23.51)	88(14.89)	22.87*	6
	9 th	40(7.09)	87(15.42)	222(39.36)	133(23.58)	82(14.53)		
	11 th	36(6.40)	101(17.97)	203(36.12)	164(29.18)	59(10.49)		
Rigid	7 th	63(10.65)	136(23.01)	159(26.90)	127(21.48)	106(17.93)	51.97**	6
	9 th	36(6.40)	103(18.32)	164(29.18)	136(24.19)	123(21.88)		
	11 th	51(9.04)	105(18.61)	140(24.82)	200(35.46)	68(12.05)		
Disengaged	7 th	127(21.4)	148(25.04)	127(21.48)	99(16.75)	91(15.39)	95.53**	6
	9 th	71(12.58)	140(24.82)	187(33.15)	127(22.51)	39(6.91)		
	11 th	59(10.47)	209(37.12)	147(26.1)	111(19.71)	37(6.57)		
Communication	7 th	84(14.21)	128(21.65)	128(21.65)	128(21.65)	123(20.81)	116.52**	6
	9 th	65(11.52)	48(8.51)	134(23.75)	206(36.52)	111(19.68)		
	11 th	32(5.68)	36(6.39)	178(31.61)	208(36.94)	109(19.36)		
Satisfaction	7 th	94(15.90)	175(29.61)	88(14.89)	87(14.72)	148(25.04)	193.97**	6
	9 th	60(10.63)	107(18.97)	190(33.68)	114(20.21)	94(16.66)		
	11 th	46(8.19)	92(16.39)	232(41.35)	154(27.45)	39(6.95)		

As far as age related changes in perceived parent child relationship are concerned; all χ^2 values are significant. Hence, it could be concluded that the Quality of relationship is not independent of age of adolescents. In general adolescent of 11th class display more cohesion and flexibility with their parents than 7th and 9th class. Since these two dimensions are indicative of balanced family relationship, it shows that late adolescents show better balanced family relationship than early and middle adolescents and continuously increased by class.

When 7th, 9th and 11th class have been compared for four unbalanced family relationship aspects i.e. Enmeshed, chaotic, rigid and disengage, more percentage of 9th and 11th class fall under medium Enmeshed categories as compared to 7th class. Chaotic are medium in all classes. Adolescents of 9th class feel pressured to spend most free time together. Consequently adolescents of 11th class get more rigid treatment and their family become frustrated when there is a change in plans and routine as compared to 7th and 9th class. Disengagement shows wave like trend. There is significant increase in disengagement by 9th as compared to 7th class and then shows significant decline by 11th class. Adolescents of 9th class seem disorganized family as compared to 7th and 11th class. Quality of communication within the family fall under high category for all classes and satisfied with how they communication with each other. Satisfaction are increased by age and highest in late adolescent age and their family members more concern for each other in comparison of early and middle adolescent age

4. Conclusion

Quality of parent-adolescent relationships is affected by age and gender. Guidance and Intervention programs should be planned according to age and gender of adolescents. Adolescents' boys and girls, at every stage of development, have different needs, pattern of interaction, cohesion and feeling of engagement hence need different type of communication and treatment.

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