

# Parenting Styles and its Effects on Adolescents' Self-Esteem

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**Abstract - During adolescence teenagers go through puberty, when they develop their sexual, gender, and ethnic identities. During adolescence Peer relationships and social acceptance become increasingly important and they are in the process of breaking away from their parents and finding their own identity. The teen years have unique stresses and pressures and therefore adults and parents play a vital role in providing support and helping teens achieve their best. There are conflicts between parents and their adolescent children because of the generation gap and the parent's inability to understand their adolescent.**

**Parenting teenagers has rewards and challenges. Good parent-teen relationships include respect, understanding, trust, and concern. Building a good relationship with their teens by spending time together, keeping promises, using humor, and appreciating their efforts and strengths can prove to be beneficial for a teen's success and his self image.**

**Adolescents and parents both go through a transition period, where the parents need to play a vital role to make this transition period a comfortable one for their teen. It is observed that Teens are less likely to take risks if they have good relationships with their parents. This research aims to study the effects of parenting attitudes on the adolescents' self-esteem.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical phase of life where an individual undergoes many changes. The word 'adolescence' comes from the Latin verb 'adolescere', which means 'to grow' or 'to grow to maturity'. It is a period of transition when the individual changes physically and psychologically from a child to an adult. "Adolescence is much more than one rung up the ladder from childhood. It is a built-in, necessary transition period for ego development. There are various factors like family structure, transition in emotionality, transition in socialization, the social status, changed body, levels of aspiration, their achievements, religious beliefs that play a significant role in adolescent development. Among the various family factors that might influence child and adolescent development, parenting styles have been recognized as important.

Conceptual models of the nature of parenting styles and their influences on child and adolescent development have been formulated (e.g. Maccoby & Martin, 1983), and empirical evidence on the links between parenting styles and different areas of adolescent development, including academic achievement has been found (Dornbusch, Ritter, 2001). Researchers attribute the nonconformity factors of adolescents to the 'generation gap' that exists between the adolescence and their parents. Perhaps, the most significant change in life pattern has come from the greater educational and cultural advantages today's adolescents have (Hurlock 1998).

### A. Parenting style

Parenting style provides a robust indicator of parenting functioning that predicts child well-being across a wide spectrum of environment. Parental responsiveness and parental demandingness are important components of good parenting. Parenting style usually is conceptualized along two dimensions: parental demandingness (control) and parental responsiveness (warmth), which can be combined to create four categories of parenting: authoritative (high demandingness and high responsiveness), authoritarian (high demandingness and low responsiveness), indulgent or

permissive (low demandingness and low responsiveness), and indifferent or neglecting (low demandingness and low responsiveness) (Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Research has shown that authoritative parenting is more related to higher levels of adjustment (Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991), psychosocial maturity (Lamborn, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989), psychosocial competence (Lamborn, Steinberg, Mounts & Dornbusch, 1991), self-esteem (Bartle, Anderson, & Sabatelli, 1989; Johnson, Shulman, & Cplins, 1991), and academic success (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh).

### B. *Self-esteem*

The term self-esteem comes from a Greek word meaning "reverence for self." The "self" part of self-esteem pertains to the values, beliefs and attitudes that we hold about ourselves. The "esteem" part of self-esteem describes the value and worth that one gives oneself. Simplistically self-esteem is the acceptance of us for whom and what we are at any given time in our lives. Rosenberg (1965) states: "when we speak of high self esteem ..., we ... simply mean that the individual respects himself, considers himself worthy. Low self esteem, on the other hand implies self rejection, self dissatisfaction, self contempt". Most researchers agree that parental affection/support is positively related to adolescent (Harper, 1987; Kawas, Peterson, Southworth, and Peters, 1983). Likewise a parenting style that avoids the use of guilt, anxiety, and love withdrawal for use in controlling behaviour appears to have a positive relationship with the self-esteem in adolescents (Graybill, 1987; Kwash et al Litovisky and Dusek, 1985). It is believed that such behaviors instill in children a sense of their inherent value ( Openshaw et al, 1984). A somewhat more ambiguous picture emerges regarding parental discipline should promote self esteem( Baumrind, 1968; Coopersmith, 1967; Edler, 1963), yet empirical support for this hypothesis is limited. Some studies indicate that mild form of punishment is associated with high self-esteem in children (Growe, 1980; Peterson et al., 1983). Others argue that excessive parental control (discipline) is linked to low self-esteem (Litovsky and Dusek, 1986; Openshaw et al., 1984). However no clear conclusion could be drawn out of the various studies carried on. The individual's positive or negative evaluation of one's own worth or value is known as self-esteem. It influences the psychological development and wellbeing of adolescents including their mental health adjustment and academic attainment. Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviors that work individually and together none is more significant than the family.

### C. *What affects self-esteem?*

There are a multitude of factors which can affect self-esteem but arguably none is more significant than the family. This is not to imply that the family is the cause of an individual's level of self-esteem but rather has a 'predisposing' effect. Certain parental attitudes have been found to effect self-esteem (Mruk: 1995, Joseph: 1994). These are:

- *Parental involvement* - the greater a parents involvement with and to their child the higher the levels of self-esteem.
- *Parental warmth* - also defined as unconditional positive acceptance (Joseph: 1994) is the ability to accept a child's strengths and weaknesses. This acceptance is 'warm' in that it is balanced.
- *Clear expectations* - boundaries that are clear and firm without being authoritarian help the child ascertain what behaviours are acceptable and what are not.
- *Respect* - respect for one's children coupled with a democratic or authoritative parenting style has the most positive effect on self-esteem.
- *Parental consistency* - being consistent in the treatment of one's children enhances self-esteem because it reinforces the value of the child to the parent.
- *Empowering children* - confident, capable individuals who believe they can achieve generally have positive self-esteem (Joseph: 1994). Parents can empower children by fostering responsibility for their feelings and actions.
- *Modeling* - children imitate what they see. Parents who face life's challenges honestly and directly expose their children to examples of problem-solving strategies which can enhance self-esteem.
- *Positive thinking* - a positive perspective helps us see the good things in life rather than the bad, which helps foster a positive self-esteem.

Just as there are experiences which build self-esteem there are others which can have a damaging effect on self-esteem (Van Ness 1995). Some of these are:

- *Repeated negative evaluation by others* - if we are repeatedly told we are dumb, stupid, slow, fat and so on we can come to believe this.
- *Severe or repeated criticism* - self-worth and self-confidence can be damaged if we are told that we are 'not good enough' or 'below average'.
- *Negative humour, putdowns and 'barbed kidding'* - all of these are criticism disguised in a joke but nonetheless are a powerful form of putdown.
- *Mistakes, errors or failures* - whilst all of these experiences are normal occurrences in the path of experience, for many they can lower confidence and ultimately self-esteem.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of literature in this area shows that some research studies have been carried out in respect to parental attitudes and its influence on adolescent self esteem. Some of these studies are cited below:

1. Family relationship and Adolescent self –esteem. The findings indicated that adolescents who perceived that there was no parental favoritism and who felt accepted by the family had higher self –esteem than those who perceived avoidance in the family structure.

2. 'Relationship between self esteem and parenting style.' It was found that, within the Western Cultures, Self esteem consistently had been demonstrated to be *inversely* related with parenting styles characterized by low levels of acceptance and high levels of overprotection (i.e., affectionless control).

3. Maternal and Paternal Parenting Styles in Adolescents: Associations with Self-Esteem, Depression and Life-Satisfaction. Authoritative mothering was found to relate to higher self-esteem and life-satisfaction and to lower depression. Paternal parenting styles was also related to psychological adjustment, however, although the advantage of authoritative mothering over permissive mothering was evident for all outcomes assessed, for paternal styles the advantage was less defined and only evident for depression.

## III. METHODOLOGY:

### Aim

To study the effect of Parenting Attitudes on Self-Esteem of Adolescents.

### Hypothesis

- Adolescents perceiving parental acceptance attitude will have higher self-esteem than the adolescents perceiving concentration and avoidance attitude of parents.
- Adolescents perceiving concentrated parental attitude will have higher self-esteem than the adolescents perceiving avoidance parental attitude.

### Sample

A Sample of 78, XI Grade students, from two C.B.S.E. schools from Nagpur were selected for the study. The average age of the respondents was 17.2 years.

### Tools

- The Family Relationship Inventory: The Family Relationship Inventory by Dr. G.P. Sherry and Dr. J.C. Sinha was administered on 200 adolescents. The inventory contains 150 items classified into three patterns of mother and father separately. The inventory is available in Hindi language.
- Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg 1965): Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale is a ten item scale; with items answered on four point scales- from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Studies have demonstrated both a one-dimensional and a two-factor (self-confidence and self-deprecation) structure to the scale.

#### IV. RESULTS

The purpose of the present study was to study the effects of parenting attitudes on self – esteem. For, the same, 78 adolescents were selected for the three parenting attitudes of acceptance, concentration and avoidance. The Self-Esteem Questionnaire was administered and the scores were obtained. From the above scores Means and S. D were calculated.

N= 78	Acceptance Attitude		Concentration Attitude		Avoidance Attitude	
	26		26		26	
	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD
Self-Esteem	20.46	1.19	16.62	1.19	16.27	1.19

Table 1. Showing the X and S.D of the three Parenting Attitudes on Self – Esteem of Adolescents.

From the Table No. 1, it is observed that mean of the Self – Esteem scores are varying on Acceptance, Concentration and Avoidance attitudes. As we cannot derive exact conclusion from mere face values, the ANOVA was employed.

The summary of ANOVA is given in following table:

Table 2. Summary of ANOVA for Self Esteem , F value is 9.09\*\* significant at both 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance

Source of Variance	SS	df	MSS	F ratio
Between Group	281.56	2	140.78	9.09**
Within Group	1161.73	75	15.49	
Total	1380.29	77		

Table No 2 (a)

Table showing X, S. D and the t ratio for mean scores of Acceptance and Concentration Parenting Attitudes.

N= 52	X	S.D	t ratio
Accepting	04.31	0.27	14.22**
Concentration	09.19	0.27	

Table No. 2 (b)

Table showing X, S. D and the t ratio for mean scores of Acceptance and Avoidance Parenting Attitudes.

N= 52	X	S.D	t ratio
Accepting	04.31	0.27	15.51**
Avoidance	11.50	0.27	

\*\* Significant at both 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance

Table No. 2 (c)

Table showing X, S. D and the t ratio for mean scores of Concentration and Avoidance Parenting Attitudes.

N= 52	X	S.D	t ratio
Concentration	09.19	0.27	1.29 <sup>ns</sup>
Avoidance	11.50	0.27	

Not significant at both 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance.

## V. CONCLUSION

The objective of the current study was to study the effect of parental attitudes upon the adolescents' self-esteem. It was assumed that adolescents perceiving parental acceptance attitude will have higher self-esteem than the adolescents perceiving concentration and avoidance attitude of parents. The findings suggest adolescents perceiving parental acceptance attitude have a higher self-esteem than the adolescents perceiving concentration and avoidance attitude of parents. And therefore parenting attitude of acceptance significantly contributes to high self-esteem of the adolescents. Thus the hypothesis is proven to be true. Therefore, we may imply that even though family is not the cause of individual's level of self-esteem, it rather is a predisposing factor. This study proves that parental affection or support is positively related to adolescents' self-esteem.

It was also assumed that adolescents perceiving concentrated parental attitude will have higher self-esteem than the adolescents perceiving avoidance parental attitude. The findings of the present study reject this hypothesis as self-esteem of the adolescents was not proven to be distinguished by the perception concentration and avoidance parental attitudes. This might indicate that mild punishment from parents can be associated with high self-esteem in adolescents as children view their parents as their protector and care taker.

Therefore we can state that accepting attitudes of parents can contribute to high self-esteem in adolescents.

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