

Gender Differences in Perceived Parenting Styles and Socioemotional Adjustment of Adolescents

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The present research examined gender differences in perceived parenting styles and socioemotional adjustment of adolescents and examined relationship between these variables. It was hypothesized that: a). There are gender differences in perceived parenting styles and socioemotional adjustment; and b). perceived parenting styles have differential relationship with socioemotional adjustment. Sample comprised of 60 adolescents with equal number of girls and boys and was recruited from different public schools in Rawalpindi. Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991) and Socioemotional Adjustment Scale (Najam & Simeen, 1991) were used for assessment. Girls perceived their parents as authoritative and showed significantly better socioemotional adjustment as compared to boys. Findings highlight importance of parenting styles and their implications for socioemotional adjustment of adolescents.

Keywords: Parenting styles, socioemotional adjustment, gender, adolescents

Parenting styles have been considered to have significant impact on children and adolescents' personalities (see, for example, Baumrind, 1983, 1991). Parenting style has two important aspects i.e., parental responsiveness and parental demandingness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). *Parental responsiveness* refers to the extent to which

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parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned and supportive to children's special needs and demands. *Parental demandingness* refers to the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts, and willingness to confront the child who disobeys (Baumrind, 1983, 1991).

Parenting styles are mainly classified into three major categories namely, authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. *Authoritative* parents are assertive, firm, and directional, but give freedom within limits. *Authoritarian* parents are operating, demanding, rejecting, and not responsive, whereas, *permissive* parents are non-punitive, accepting, and affirmative. They are not demanding, uninvolved, and low in responsiveness (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). An additional parenting style denoted as *rejecting-neglecting* was proposed by Maccoby and Martin (1983) and it refers to the parents who are disengaged, expect little, and invest little.

Parental involvement is crucial for adolescents' socialization and emotional adjustment. Socialization enables a child to regulate his/her desirable or socially responsible behavior. Adolescents who perceive their parents authoritative feel attached to them and are reported to have positive self-perception (Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989). Darling and Steinberg (1993) assert that through child rearing practices parents help children achieve their socialization goals. According to Freud, infant-mother relationship "is unique, without parallel, established unalterably for a whole lifetime as the first and strongest love object and as the prototype of all later love-relations" (as cited in Lamb, Hwang, Ketterlinus, & Fracasso, 1999, p. 411).

Emotional adjustment refers to one's understanding of self and others, capacity to appraise people and environment, social interaction, self-control, and awareness of social rules or conventions. Emotion regulation is also an important aspect of emotional adjustment. According to Thompson, *emotional regulation* is the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features (as cited in Keenan, 2002).

Parenting styles and parenting practices influence adolescents' openness to parental values and willingness to socialize. Early emotional bond with parents lead to development of adult social competencies. Mallinckrodt (1992) examined younger adults' social support, social competencies, social efficacy, and internal/external attributions for social outcomes, memories of care, and emotional

bonds with parents. Early parental bonds showed positive relationship with self-efficacy and social-efficacy of youngsters. Similarly, Steinberg et al. (1989) reported authoritative parenting styles positively associated with psychosocial maturity of the adolescence and their academic success.

Kim, Conger, Elder, and Lorenz (2001) investigated reciprocal nature of negative affect in interactions between parents and adolescents in a 9 year longitudinal study. Their study suggested that family negative interactional style has adverse influence on the development of early adult social and emotional relationships. Parental rejecting style may lead to poor regulation of emotions and personality development (Whitbeck et al., 1992). Kochanska (1992) argues that role of parents in social development of children is very crucial. Her findings suggest that authoritarian parents who discourage their children's social interaction with peer lead to aggressive behavior. Hostile home atmosphere, parental domination, and overprotective behaviors of parents may result in rebellious attitude and isolation. Authoritative parents foster nurturing environment for their children that helps to generate feelings of warmth and enable them to regulate their emotions positively in social settings such as interacting with friends or peer group.

In a longitudinal study, Marcel, Aken, and Walraven (1992) observed for both girls and boys that parental responsiveness had significant effect on competence of a child, which is closely related to later social support. Results showed a strong effect of parental support on a child's competence in infancy to the end of the elementary school and competence of a child was associated with later parental support. In case of boys, parents were more consistent and regarded his autonomy which was associated with earlier competence. In case of girls, parental support was associated with her earlier competence.

Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) found that adolescents girls from a wide range of socioeconomic background were more emotionally autonomous compared to boys. Their finding was contrary to the prevalent notion about male adolescents showing greater autonomy than girls. Raja, McGee, and Stanton (1992) examined psychological well-being of adolescents in relation to perceived attachment to parents and peers. They did not find any significant gender differences in perceived attachment to parents, nonetheless, female adolescents scored significantly higher than male adolescents on attachment with peers. Perceived parental attachment was found more crucial for adolescents' psychological well-being.

Steinberg (2001) in his review of research on adolescent development in the context of family provided ample research evidence to conclude that authoritative parenting style which is marked with warmth, firmness, and acceptance of adolescents' need for autonomy is beneficial for adolescents. He emphasized that parents must be trained in attaining such a style for healthy growth of their adolescents. In a cluster-analytic investigation of authoritarian parenting style in Asian societies by Ang and Goh (2006) suggested that the authoritarian parenting styles in an Asian context are associated with school adjustment variables such as attitude towards school and attitude towards teachers. They provided two-cluster typology which serves as a framework to study the conflicting findings associated with authoritarian parenting styles in Asian context. The findings revealed that in Asian cultural context authoritarian parenting style is not negatively associated with adjustment. They were more self-reliant having high self-esteem, good interpersonal relations, and a low sense of inadequacy.

Keeping in view Pakistan's sociocultural context, girls get more protective environment and parental attention. Girls are expected to stay at home and spend most of their time with family. Adolescence is a demanding period and youngsters develop new interpersonal relationships. In Pakistan, boys are allowed to socialize and spend time outside home with their friends, whereas, in case of girls, this is not acceptable. Protectiveness towards girls may have mixed effect on girls' socioemotional adjustment as it may protect them from harm and exploitation, but at the same time it may be counterproductive and inhibit their socialization experience. For boys, freedom to socialize may also have negative and positive implications. It allows them to develop interpersonal and social skills, but at the same time it can put them at risk for exploitation. In this context it is important to refer to the heinous act of serial killing by Javed Iqbal who in 1999 sexually abused and killed 100 boys (age ranging from 6-16 years) in Lahore (Wikipedia, 2008). This incidence has changed Pakistani parents' point of view towards their boys' particularly adolescents' protection.

Main objective of the present study was to explore gender differences in perceived parenting styles and socioemotional adjustment of Pakistani adolescents. The study also aimed to examine relationship between perceived parenting style and socioemotional adjustment of adolescents. It is assumed that:

1. Girls perceive their fathers more authoritative as compared to boys, whereas boys perceive their fathers more authoritarian as compared to girls.

2. Boys perceive their mothers more authoritative as compared to girls, whereas girls perceive their mothers more authoritarian as compared to boys.
3. Perceived authoritarian parenting style is negatively related with socioemotional adjustment of adolescents.
4. Perceived authoritative parenting style is positively related with socioemotional adjustment of adolescents.

Method

Sample

The participants of the present study were 60 adolescents including equal number of boys and girls. Over all 9th class students were recruited by purposive sampling technique from four schools in Rawalpindi i.e., two girl schools and two boy schools public. Only those adolescents were included who were from intact families i.e., living with both biological parents. Those adolescents who were living with single parents were excluded from the study. In case of two siblings studying in the same class, both of them were excluded from the study. Of the total 160 adolescents, 30 did not meet the inclusion criteria as 20 were not living with intact families and 10 adolescents were two siblings in the same class. From remaining 90 adolescents, required sample of 60 was recruited randomly. The adolescents had mean age of 14 years ($SD = 0.90$). Participants were having four siblings on average. Mothers in most of the cases were educated up to intermediate level and house wives and majority of the fathers were educated up to graduation (see Table 1, for demographic distribution along educational level of parents).

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages along Education Level of Parents of the Participants (N = 60)

Education level	Father	Mother
Illiterate	1 (1.66%)	5 (8.33%)
Primary	0 (0)	9 (15%)
Middle	9 (15%)	7 (11.66%)
Matric	10 (16.7%)	7 (11.66%)
Intermediate	15 (25%)	17 (28.35%)
Gradate	21 (35.3%)	11 (18.33%)
Post-graduate	2 (3.3%)	0 (0)
Missing	2 (3.3%)	4 (6%)

Instruments

The following assessment measures were used to assess parenting styles and socioemotional adjustment of adolescents.

Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). It was originally developed by Buri (1991) to measure Baumrind's (1991) typology of parenting styles i.e., permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting style prototypes. PAQ assesses the magnitude and manner in which authority is exercised by parents as perceived by children. Each item of the questionnaire is stated from the point of view of an individual evaluating the patterns of authority exercised by his or her parents. The questionnaire consists of 30 items for each parent and yields *Permissive*, *Authoritarian*, and *Authoritative* scores for both father and mother, separately. Each subscale consists of 10 items. Each item is rated on 5-point Likert-type rating scale ranging from *completely true* (5) to *completely wrong* (1). Scores on each of those subscales can range from 10 to 50. Higher the score, greater is the appraised level of the specific parental authority prototype measured. For the present study, PAQ was translated in to Urdu (Pakistani National Language). Cronbach alpha reliability of Parental Authority Questionnaire for the present study in case of mothers was .72 and in case of fathers was .64. Reliability coefficients for three parenting style subscales i.e., Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive parenting style were .65, .66, and .63, respectively.

Socioemotional Adjustment Scale. It is an indigenous scale developed (Najam & Simeen, 1991) for assessment of socioemotional adjustment of adolescents. It contains 33 questions. It assesses five dimensions of socioemotional adjustment i.e., *Overall adjustment*, *Social acceptability*, *Emotional regulation*, *Self-reliance*, and *Appreciation from others*. Twenty six items (score ranging from 0-67) constitute five subscales i.e., Overall adjustment comprises of 4 items (score ranging from 0-10), Social acceptability comprises of 6 items (score ranging from 0-14), Emotional regulation comprises of 7 items (score ranging from 0-18), Self-reliance and Appreciation from others scales comprise of 5 (score ranging from 0-13) and 4 items (score ranging from 0-12), respectively, and are rated on 3-point Likert scale (total = 26 items). Five are dichotomous items and 3 are open-ended. Scoring is reversed for negative statements (12 items).

For the present study, the Cronbach alphas for Overall adjustment, Social acceptability, Emotional regulation, Self-reliance, and Appreciation from others were .65, .62, .68, .65, and .66,

respectively and for total scale Cronbach alpha was .67. Authors of the scale has reported satisfactory reliability of subscales ranging from .67-.72 (Najam & Sameen, 1991). Earlier research has reported satisfactory reliability for subscales of the scale (Muneer, 2007).

Procedure

In order to collect data, school administration was approached for seeking approval and cooperation. The school principals deputed respective class teachers to facilitate data collection. After having logistics of data collection finalized, the researcher visited schools. All class students were distributed questionnaires prepared for screening them whether they were living in intact families (living with both biological parents). Students' responses were scanned through and those meeting inclusion criteria were requested to stay back in the class and participate in the study. In case of having two siblings in the same class, they were excluded from the study. Nature of the study was explained to potential participants and their written consent was taken. Adolescents completed assessment measures in group in the researcher's presence. The researcher clarified and explained to the participants if they felt difficulty while completing assessment measures. Average time taken by the participants to complete protocols ranged from 30 to 45 minutes.

Results

The present research aimed at examining gender differences in perceived parenting styles and socioemotional adjustment of adolescents. The study also explored perceived parenting styles and its relationship with adolescents' socioemotional adjustment. Data was analyzed using paired sample *t*-test, independent sample *t*-test, and partial correlation analyses.

Gender differences in perceived parenting styles were examined by using independent sample *t*-test analysis. Results indicated that girls perceived their fathers significantly more Permissive and Authoritative as compared to boys. On the contrary, boys perceived their mothers as more Authoritative compared to girls, but for Authoritarian there is no gender differences in perception of either of parents (Table 2). Hence, findings lend partial support to hypotheses 1 and 2.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-test Showing Gender Differences in the Perceptions of Parenting Styles (N = 60)

Perceived Parenting Style	Boys		Girls		<i>t</i>
	<i>(n = 30)</i>		<i>(n = 30)</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Authoritative					
Father	40.87	5.12	44.03	4.02	2.58**
Mother	44.67	3.81	40.43	6.82	2.97***
Authoritarian					
Father	36.30	6.17	34.20	6.79	1.25
Mother	35.20	5.68	37.27	6.10	1.36
Permissive					
Father	28.77	5.06	32.30	5.56	2.58**
Mother	29.13	6.88	29.07	5.48	0.04

df = 58. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Analysis pertaining to gender differences in socioemotional adjustment revealed that girls showed significantly better socioemotional adjustment as compared to boys (Table 3).

Table 3

Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-test Showing Gender Differences in Socioemotional Adjustment (N = 60)

Socioemotional Adjustment Scale	Boys (n = 30)		Girls (n = 30)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Overall adjustment	8.20	1.16	8.20	1.47	0.00
Social acceptability	8.87	1.11	8.70	1.06	0.57
Sharing with others	1.80	0.40	1.87	0.34	0.68
Emotional regulation	11.87	1.22	12.57	1.07	2.30*
Self reliance	9.23	1.40	10.33	1.70	2.72**
Total	39.97	2.76	41.67	3.24	2.18*

df = 58. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Girls scored significantly higher on Emotional regulation and Self-reliance subscales as well as total socioemotional adjustment score compared to boys (Table 3), whereas on rest of the subscales there is nonsignificant difference.

Since there were gender differences in the perception of parenting styles, therefore it was decided that the effect of gender is to be controlled in order to examine relationship between parenting styles and socioemotional adjustment of adolescents. Partial correlation analysis allowed examining relationship between perceived parenting style and socioemotional adjustment of adolescents was carried out after controlling the effect of adolescents' gender (Table 4).

Table 4

Relationship between Perceived Parenting Styles and Socioemotional Adjustment after Controlling for the Effect of Adolescents' Gender (N = 60)

Perceived Parenting Styles	OA	ER	SR	SWO	SA	Total
Permissive						
Father	.24	.18	.08	.10	-.26*	.17
Mother	.15	.09	.07	.05	-.24	.21
Authoritative						
Father	.13	.13	.05	.25*	.38**	.33**
Mother	.09	.11	.09	.26*	.31**	.29*
Authoritarian						
Father	-.07	.04	.09	.20	.00	.22
Mother	-.24	.10	.03	.17	.00	-.26*

Note. OA = Overall adjustment; ER = Emotional regulation; SR = Self-reliance; SWO = Sharing with others; SA = Social acceptability.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Analysis indicated that perception of father being Permissive showed significant negative relationship with adolescents' Social acceptability. Perception of both parents being Authoritative showed positive relationship with adolescents' social acceptability and their ability to share with others. Perception of mother being Authoritarian showed negative relationship with total socioemotional adjustment, however, nonsignificant relationship emerged between Authoritarian parenting style of father and subscales of Socioemotional Adjustment Scale. Hypotheses pertaining positive relationship between Authoritative parenting style and socioemotional adjustment is supported and the one pertaining Authoritarian parenting style and its negative relationship with socioemotional adjustment is partially supported.

Discussion

The present study examined adolescents' perceived parenting styles and socioemotional adjustment of adolescents. Moreover, it explored gender differences in perceived parenting styles and socioemotional adjustment. It revealed girls perceived their fathers as more Permissive and Authoritative compared to boys and boys perceived their mothers more Authoritative. However, there were no gender differences in perception of Authoritarian parenting style. This finding can be explained in the light of Psychodynamic perspective, which views girls' inclination towards their fathers and boys towards their mothers (Pervin & John, 1997; Ryckman, 1997). In Pakistani context, parents generally exercise control in rearing their children and specifically mothers are strict in their daughters' upbringing and disciplining. Similarly, fathers exercise more control over their sons and are more relaxed and loving towards their daughters.

Boys showed less socioemotional adjustment than their female counterparts. It was found that girls scored significantly higher on Emotional regulation and Self-reliance as compared to boys. Girls, therefore, were better capable in regulation of emotions and are more self-reliant as compared to boys. Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) also reported that girls are more emotionally autonomous than males. One plausible explanation for this finding could be that in Pakistani parents pay more importance to their daughters' physical and physiological changes as compared to their sons. Parents also give more importance to socialization of their daughters than sons by encouraging their daughters to adopt more familial and compromising

roles, while they more readily endorse aggressive values, control of emotions, and independence in their sons (Saarni, 1989).

In the present study it was found that fathers' perception as Permissive had negative relationship with social acceptability of adolescents. Perception of both parents as Authoritative had positive relationship with social acceptability of adolescents and their ability to share with others. The finding that Authoritative parenting style has positive relationship with socioemotional adjustment of adolescents is consistent with those of Beyers and Goossens (1999, 2007) who found that students' perception of high quality responsive parenting styles was associated with better social and emotional adjustment. Authoritative parents foster in the nurturing environment, generate feelings of warmth, regulate their off-springs' emotions positively, and enable them to interact in a healthy manner in social settings (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Moreover, adolescents of authoritative parents have been reported to have high self-esteem, strong social and emotional development, and urge to succeed because they perceive their parents consistent in warmth (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). Steinberg et al. (1989) also elaborated that authoritativeness has positive impact on psychosocial maturity of the adolescents which in turn helps them develop positive peer relationships. Adolescents who perceived warmth and democratic relationship tend to be better in psychosocial growth. Authoritative parenting is helpful in fostering healthy emotions as compared to authoritarian parenting.

The present study demonstrated gender differences in perceived parenting style and socioemotional adjustment of adolescents. It also indicated relationship between perceived parenting styles and socioemotional adjustment. Findings highlight importance of parenting styles and its effects on adolescents' socioemotional adjustment. It is concluded that those adolescents who perceive their parents authoritative show better socioemotional adjustment, whereas permissive parenting style is counterproductive for adolescents' socioemotional adjustment. Findings highlight significance of authoritative parenting style for healthy socioemotional development of adolescents.

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