



ISSN (E): 2277-7695
ISSN (P): 2349-8242
NAAS Rating: 5.23
TPI 2023; SP-12(7): 839-845
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www.thepharmajournal.com

Received: 19-05-2023

Accepted: 20-06-2023

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Self-perceived parenting behaviour of parents of adolescents

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Abstract

The present study aimed to understand self-perceived parenting behaviour of parents of adolescents which was conducted in the district of Jorhat, Assam. The sample consisted of 100 mother-father dyads with adolescents in the 13–15 age group who were recruited through schools. Data were collected with the help of the parenting behaviour scale of Arnold *et al.* and analysed statistically using the mean, SD, t-test, and chi-square test. The findings of the study revealed that mothers of adolescents show more verbosity and over reactivity in parenting behaviour, while fathers show more laxness in parenting behaviour. An association between demographic variables and parenting behaviour was also observed in the study, where a significant association was found between the number of children in the family and the parenting behaviour of parents.

Keywords: Parenting behaviour, dysfunctional parenting, self-perception, adolescent

1. Introduction

1.1 Parenting Behaviour

Parenting behaviour plays a major role in interacting with adolescents in complex ways and shaping their behaviour. As they grow, parents need to adopt new developmentally appropriate skills to maintain positive relationships and meet their children's developmental needs. Parents use different parenting practices under different dimensions of parental warmth, structure, and autonomy support as different constructive dimensions and parental rejection, coercion, and chaos as negative dimensions of parenting (Skinner *et al.*, 2005; Goagoses *et al.*, 2022) [23, 40]. Based on these dimensions, the most common types of parenting behaviour are authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting styles. Moreover, some other types of parenting behaviours that parents tend to adopt while disciplining their children, as developed by Arnold *et al.* (1993) [41], are known as dysfunctional or ineffective parenting behaviours. Parenting that is harsh, inconsistent, or extremely permissive can be considered dysfunctional. These parenting styles can be measured in the form of laxness, overreactivity, and verbosity (Arnold *et al.*, 1993) [41]. Parental responses that are inconsistent or lazy for the misconduct done by children are known as lax parenting, where parents frequently withdraw from their requests for child compliance or give in to children's unsuitable demands. Over-reactive parenting is considered a harsh and angry approach that includes bullying, insults, frustration, and physical punishment in responding to the misconduct of children. Verbosity parenting behaviour is the use of prolonged or tedious oral responses and warnings, as well as the expression of verbal commands even when they are ineffective (Slep & O'Leary, 1998; Alex, 2018) [42]. Difficulty in parenting leads to overreactivity, verbosity, and laxness in parenting, which are associated with children's socio-emotional difficulties (Walsh *et al.* 2020) [43]. Adolescents who are exposed to negative parenting have immense negative developmental, psychological, and health impacts (Evans, *et al.* 2008; Kimball, 2016; Vu *et al.* 2016; Walsh *et al.*, 2020) [24, 26]. Experiencing violence in terms of dysfunctional parenting, adolescents experience more internalising problem behaviour (e.g., anxiety, depression, eating disorders), externalising (e.g., substance abuse, delinquency, conduct disorders), cognitive difficulties, negative interpersonal relationships, and physical health difficulties than adolescents who are not exposed to negative parenting (Walsh *et al.* 2020) [43].

1.2 Parenting behaviour during adolescence

Adapting caregiving practices that fulfil the needs and desires of adolescents seems like a great challenge for parents. At this stage, both parents face a lot of difficulties in dealing with their children's emotional disturbances and changing demands.

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The parents sometimes feel helpless, become confused, and even try to talk to their children in a holistic manner during this period. Adolescents frequently experience emotional, physical, mental, social, and behavioural changes (Kaye DK, 2008) that result in complications for them to adjust with themselves and with those around them. This is challenging for both the parents and the adolescents (Seraji F., Alibakhshi M., 2015) [29] and often increases conflicts among them (Parvizi S., Ahmadi F., 2007) [30]. The absence of appropriate communication between adolescents and their parents is considered one of the greatest difficulties during this period. (2012). Most of the time, parents feel their adolescents are discordant, and this perception leads parents to engage in distinctive behaviours against their children (Talakoub *et al.* 2013; Valizadeh 2018) [36, 39]. Since adolescents find difficulty adjusting to their environment, parents need to support them to overcome the problems and guide them to confront the baffling situations in a mature way. The capacity of parents to helpfully confess or summarise the viewpoint of adolescents has been constantly linked with better relationship satisfaction, more supportive communication, and better conflict resolution (Main A. *et al.* 2016) [12]. Whatever the type of parenting behaviour parents adopt, understanding self-perception is important for a better understanding of effective parenting. Parental self-perception comprises several likely features, such as a feeling of proficiency while performing the parental role, participation in caretaking activities, happiness from parent-child relationships, and the capacity to bring stability to child care with an additional role in life (Bornstein *et al.*, 2003) [31]. In fact, self-perceived parenting behaviour is a substantial predictor that determines the level of investment parents have in their adolescents (Attanasio, 2019) [33]. Parents who perceive themselves as proficient are self-assured in their capabilities and can visualise the possible effects of their strategic actions and can most possibly perform the role of positive and cooperative partners for the holistic development of their children. Parents capability to maintain responsiveness to their own feelings and thoughts may assist cooperative communication and support their adolescents' autonomous decision-making and self-regulation (Bornstein *et al.*, 2011; Roger K. *et al.*, 2017) [2, 14]. The self-perception of parents is positively connected with constructive parenting and negatively connected with undesirable parenting behaviours like unreliable discipline and withdrawal of love (Newland 2013) [22]. In addition, self-perceived parenting behaviour helps parents comprehend how effectively they are steering and supporting their children and also gives them the scope to modify their inappropriate behaviour into effective parenting.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Selection of the sample

The current study was descriptive research that attempted to find out the self-perception of parenting behaviour of parents of adolescents and was conducted in Jorhat district of Assam. Four high schools were chosen purposefully from all the schools under the state board and the central board. The sample for the present study was 100 mother-father dyads with adolescents of 13–15 years. Parents were recruited through schools. Adolescents, including both girls and boys, were chosen randomly from each of the 4 schools based on matched parental criteria. The father-mother dyads matched

on specific criteria: minimum education up to a higher secondary level, parents who were staying together, and parents who were free from chronic illnesses.

2.2. Selection of Tools

A questionnaire was constructed to collect the background information of the respondents. The parenting scale developed by Arnold *et al.* 1993 [41] was used to assess the self-perception of parents, consisting of thirty statements. The scale consists of three parenting behaviours, namely verbosity, over reactivity, and laxness, which reflect overly wordy, strict, and permissive responses to child misbehaviour, respectively. The scale usually measures the dysfunctional discipline styles of parents by asking about the possibility with which they use actual discipline strategies. The scale is based on a 7-point scale, with low scores representing better parenting and higher scores showing dysfunctional parenting. Each item is scored on the basis of whether the 'ideal' anchor is on the right or left side. If the "ideal" anchor is on the right, it is scored as 7, and if the "ideal" anchor is on the left, the scoring procedure is reversed.

2.3. Procedure for data collection

With prior permission from the school authority, self-constructed questionnaires for collecting background information from the parents were distributed among the adolescents aged 13–15 in the selected schools. Students were instructed to get the questionnaires filled out by their parents without omitting any statements. The researcher gave assurance about the confidentiality of the respondent's response, and they were informed that the data would be used exclusively for research purposes. From the background information obtained from the parents, father-mother dyads were selected based on the matched criteria of the parents. After the selection of the sample, data were collected through a home visit. During data collection, respondents were instructed to fill up each section of the questionnaire based on the instructions given in the Parenting Behaviour Scale without omitting any items. An effort was made by the researcher to clarify the doubts during the period of data collection.

2.4. Statistical analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and chi-square test, were applied for the analysis of data. The data were analysed with the help of SPSS software version 18.

3. Results

Results of the present study obtained from the parents of adolescents with the help of a parenting behaviour scale developed by Arnold *et al.* 1993 [41] were analysed separately for fathers and mothers in three areas: laxness, verbosity, and over-reactivity. To find out the significance of the difference between fathers and mothers of adolescents, the mean scores, SD, and t-test were conducted, and to assess the association between demographic characteristics and parenting behaviour of parents, the Chi-Square test was used, and the results are illustrated under the following:

Data regarding the demographic characteristics of the sample and their families are shown in the table below:

Table 3.1: Distribution of respondents according to characteristics of their family

Family characteristics	Categories	No. of family (N=100)	
		Frequency	Percentage
Types of family	Nuclear	82	82
	Joint	15	15
	Extended	3	3
No. of children	Only child	20	20
	Two children	82	82
	Three and more children	8	8
Family income	15,000-30,000	22	22
	31,000-50,000	45	45
	51,000-above	33	33
Family resources	Television	100	100
	Newspaper	70	70
	Computer	30	30
	Radio	20	20

The result shows that the majority of the respondents (82%) were from nuclear family, 15 percent were from joint family, and 3 percent were from extended family. It is also clear that the majority of the parents (82%) had two children in their family, 20 percent had one child, and 8 percent had three or more children in their family. Data also indicates that a good number of respondents (45%) had a monthly family income of Rs. 31,000–50,000, 22 percent had Rs. 15,000–30,000, and 33 percent had a monthly family income of Rs. 51,000 and

above. It was also observed that 70 percent of the respondents had newspapers, 30 percent had computers, and 20 percent had radios in their houses. All the respondents (100%) had televisions in their households.

Personal characteristics of fathers and mothers of adolescents, namely age, educational qualification, occupation, activities in leisure time, and membership in social organizations are shown in the table below.

Table 3.2: Distribution of respondents according to personal characteristics of fathers and mothers of adolescents

Characteristics	Categories	Fathers (N=100)		Mothers (N=100)	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Age	30-40 years	12	12	44	44
	40-50 years	83	83	56	56
	50-60 years	5	5	0	0
Educational qualification	Higher Secondary	48	48	53	53
	Graduate	50	50	44	44
	Post-graduate	2	2	3	3
Occupation	service	63	63	34	34
	business	37	37	9	9
	housewife	0	0	57	57
Activities in leisure time	Watching TV	70	70	92	92
	Reading newspaper	75	75	30	30
	Reading magazine	30	30	70	70
	Listening radio	15	15	5	5
Membership in social organizations	Self-help grou	0	0	84	84
	NGO	0	0	0	0
	Religious Institution	56	56	15	15
	None	44	44	11	11

Outcomes of Table 3.2 indicate that majority of the fathers (83%) category of 40–50 years, followed by 12 percent of 30–40 years and 5 percent of 40–50 years. On the other hand, the age of mothers ranged from 40 to 50 years (56%), followed by 44 percent in the age group of 30 to 40 years. Data revealed that 48 percent of fathers of adolescents had educational qualifications up to higher secondary, followed by 50 percent up to graduation level and only 2 percent up to post graduation level. On the other hand, 53 percent of mothers of adolescents had educational qualifications up to the higher secondary level, 44 percent up to the graduation level, and 3 percent up to the post-graduation level. The result also shows that 63 percent of the fathers of adolescents were service holders, and 37 percent were engaged in business. On the other hand, 34 percent of mothers of adolescents were service holders

, 9 percent were involved in business, and 57 percent were housewives. From the data, it is also clear that 75 percent of fathers spend leisure time reading newspapers, 70 percent watch TV, 30 percent read magazines, and 15 percent listen to radio. On the other hand, 92 percent of the mothers watch TV in their leisure time, 70 percent read magazines, 30 percent read newspapers, and only 5 percent listen to radio in their leisure time. A large number (84%) of the mothers of adolescents were members of self-help groups, and 15 percent were in religious institutions. On the other hand, 56 percent of fathers of adolescents had membership in religious institutions.

A Chi-Square test was conducted to find out the association between demographic characteristics and parenting behaviour of parents, and the results are shown in the following table:

Table 3.3: Association between demographic characteristics and parenting behaviour of respondents

Demographic variable	Chi-Square value	p-value
Age	8.56	0.07
Types of family	4.97	0.29
No. of children	10.72	0.03*
Household resources	7.30	0.29
Educational qualification	5.88	0.20
Occupation	8.17	0.08
Monthly family income	6.7	0.19
Membership in social organization	5.6	0.21

*Significant at 0.05 level

The result of Table 3.3 reveals that the chi-square value of the demographic characteristic ‘number of children’ is 10.72 and the p value is 0.03 at the 5 percent level of significance. It

indicates that there is a statistically significant association between the number of children and the parenting behaviour of respondents. The result also found that there is not any significant association between demographic characteristics such as age, types of family, household resources, educational qualification, occupation, monthly family income, and membership in a social organisation and the parenting behaviour of respondents, as the values of “p” are 0.07, 0.29, 0.29, 0.20, 0.08, 0.19, and 0.21, respectively, which are more than 0.05.

Scores obtained by the parents on the parenting behaviour scale were analysed separately for fathers and mothers in three areas: laxness, verbosity, and over-reactivity. To find out the significance of the difference between the mean and SD, a t-test was conducted, and the results are shown in table numbers 3.4 and 3.5.

Table 3.4: Distribution of levels of parenting behaviour among parents of adolescents

Parenting behaviour	Fathers						Mothers					
	High		Average		Low		high		Average		Low	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Laxness	17	17	65	65	18	18	7	7	65	65	28	28
Over-reactivity	12	12	68	68	20	20	17	17	63	63	20	20
Verbosity	10	10	71	71	19	19	18	18	60	60	22	22
Total	10	10	66	66	24	24	10	10	63	63	27	27

* F= frequency, P=Percentage

The result of Table 3.4, reveals that 17 percent of fathers of adolescents scored high in laxness, whereas only 7% of mothers scored high in laxness. But in the areas of over-reactivity and verbosity, a higher percentage of mothers scored high compared to fathers. The percentage of mothers in the category of low laxness was found to be 28 percent, compared to 18 percent of fathers. Lower verbosity has been seen in 22 percent of mothers compared to 19 percent of fathers. When all the aspects were analysed together, it was seen that an equal percentage of fathers (10%) and mothers (10%) were inclined towards dysfunctional parenting. However, mothers of adolescents were found to have a higher percentage of effective parenting behaviour (27%) than fathers (24%).

Table 3.5: Distribution of differences in parenting behaviour between fathers and mothers of adolescents

Father		Mother		t-value	p value
Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
3.57	0.35	3.63	0.53	2.10	0.03*
3.41	0.75	3.16	0.70	2.39	0.01*
4.15	0.92	4.68	0.78	4.36	0.00*
0.93	0.26	0.86	0.19	1.80	0.04*

*Significant at 0.05 level

The result from the above Table 3.5 a significant difference between fathers and mothers in all three aspects of parenting behaviour, namely laxness (t = 2.10, p < 0.03), over-reactivity (t = 2.39, p < 0.01), and verbosity (t = 4.36, p < 0.00) was found. In total parenting, t = 1.80, p = 0.04, which depicts a statistically significant difference in the overall parenting behaviour of parents.

4. Discussion

The primary aim of the study was to find out the self-perception of parenting behaviour among parents of adolescents. The study also aimed to seek associations

between parenting behaviour and the demographic characteristics of parents of adolescents.

4.1 Association between parenting behaviour and demographic characteristics

Data on demographic characteristics were analysed to see if they had a relationship with parenting behaviour. Analysis showed a significant association between the number of children in the family and self-perceived parenting behaviour. Parents need to provide support and guidance while raising their children. Therefore, it may sometimes be difficult for parents who have one child to make decisions in every situation of parenting and to adopt appropriate parenting strategies, due to less exposure to parenting experiences. Exposure to parenting practises with multiple children in diverse situations of children’s growing stages is much more helpful for effecting parenting than those of young parents (Whiteman and Buchanan, 2002; Glatz and Stattin, 2013) [18, 5]. When there are two or more children in their family, they get more opportunity to engage themselves in parenting tasks. They experience different situations during disciplining their children, which helps them to learn and increase their knowledge about parenting activities and may gradually help them to develop a favourable attitude towards appropriate parenting strategies. Additionally, whatever parents can acquire through parenting practices can be a basis of knowledge and that can help in shaping their attitudes (Jones and Prinz, 2005; Breiner *et al.*, 2016) [9, 37]. So, through parenting practises, parents may learn about various aspects of parenting. This is possible when there is more than one child in the family, and thus, parenting behaviour may be better when there are multiple children in the family. Hence, multiple children in the family affects the parenting behaviour of parents than those of single child.

4.2 Self-perceived parenting behaviour of parents

From the results obtained, it is seen that there is a significant

difference between the self-perceived parenting behaviours of fathers and mothers of adolescents. Results also showed that mothers had a low score in total parenting behaviour as compared to fathers, which depicts better parenting. It is also evident from the result that mothers scored high in verbosity and over reactivity as compared to fathers. From the analysis of the results, it is also clear that fathers had the highest score for lax parenting as compared to mothers.

From the results, it can be stated that parents scored lower in total parenting, which indicates better parenting. Parents provide care and support through the process of parenting to maximise the opportunities provided to children as well as to develop their potential. Parenting is the way through which parents build emotional attachment with their children by protecting them from damage and enforcing boundaries to guarantee security and help them identify themselves and develop self-esteem. Since the adolescent period is a critical period of development, parents need to be more concerned about effective parenting so that it does not have a negative impact on the personal as well as social development of their child. In such a situation, parents need information and knowledge regarding various parenting strategies, which are easier to get in today's society. In the present society, due to technological advancement and changes in social structure, communication has become easier. People can share and access information and knowledge through mass media like newspapers, books, magazines, TV, mobile phones, internet, etc. Social networking also plays an important role in providing and getting instant information regarding different issues in society. Parents are interested in integrating technology into their child-care practices to provide proper nurturance and guidance towards their children and adopting these tools at a rapid pace (Zickuhr (2013; Duggan *et al.* 2015) ^[20, 21]. Use of these technologies promotes improvements in parental knowledge, helps learn different strategies, and also provides parent efficacy and reduces parenting stress (Kaplan *et al.*, 2014; Cristin & Karen, 2015) ^[41]. Hence, parents have adequate knowledge regarding parenting and showed a higher score in total parenting.

Results also indicate that mothers adopt more verbose parenting styles as compared to fathers.

It is obvious that mothers devote more time with their offspring and remain busy with consistent child care work as well as household maintenance as compared to fathers. Since parenting adolescents involves monitoring child behaviour, providing care and guidance, and assisting children to overcome their problems, mothers, due to being more involved in parenting activities, need to adopt strategies that provide optimum benefit to the children. Mothers are more active in conversation with their children by using questions, requests, and expansions than fathers, who most of the time show other behaviours like sighing, sitting quietly, and talking with others (Wolchik, 1983; Flippin and Watson, 2015) ^[38]. Mothers use more vocal approaches than fathers to regulate behaviour of their children in a non-powerful, self-assured way (Blandon and Volling, 2008) ^[1]. Moreover, studies suggest that mothers experience more stress in the parental role in comparison with fathers, and there is a specific positive association between parental anxiety and ineffective parenting in terms of verbosity (Kaarsen *et al.* 2006; Simcock N.S. & Healy H.P. 2015) ^[10, 16]. Therefore, mothers may use more verbal instruction while disciplining their children, which results in verbose parenting. Thus, it can be stated that, as responsible caretakers, mothers need to use

more verbal commands (verbosity parenting) with their children as compared to fathers for the desired behaviour of the children and for the accomplishment of their expectations and goals as well.

From the findings, it is clear that over-reactive parenting is more prevalent in mothers as compared to fathers of adolescents. Mothers are more consistent in parenting their adolescents than fathers, possibly because of the social construct of the maternal role. Since adolescents claim more autonomy than their childhood and mothers, at the same time, show authority, this results in rising conflicts between them and less parental support (Branje *et al.*, 2012). Mothers get strained while fulfilling the demands of their adolescents and may feel negative emotional experiences and states such as fear, worry, pressure, and anxiety. They may also get exhausted from parenting practises, which results in negative parenting behaviours, including dysfunctional parenting (Mastrotheodoros *et al.*, 2019; Elmadag & Ellinger, 2018). When mothers get disturbed emotionally and are involved in strict parenting practises, it may sometimes lead to overreactivity in certain situations as compared to fathers. Furthermore, studies have found maternal stress or depression is positively associated with harsh and over-reactive parenting (Wilson & Durbin, 2010; Simcock N.S. & Healy H.P., 2015; Taraban, 2019) ^[16, 40].

It is also evident that fathers display more laxness in parenting their children than mothers. Within a family, the roles and responsibilities of fathers and mothers are different from each other. Role theory suggests that mothers being a primary caretaker dedicate more time to their children than fathers (Huerta *et al.*, 2013). Fathers are mainly concerned about the financial security of the family as well as the management of the house. According to Day *et al.*, (2004) ^[4], compared to mothers, fathers are less involved in providing consistent discipline towards children and are laxer in response to child's infringement than mothers (Van der Pol LD *et al.*, 2015) ^[17]. Consequently, mothers are more responsible for disciplining the children, whereas fathers are less possibly getting experience of situations in which they are fully accountable for their children in the absence of mothers. Hence, fathers may not concern to be involved in response to their children's defiance behaviour which results in lax parenting.

5. Conclusion

The present study explored the self-perception of parenting behaviour of parents of adolescents in terms of father and mother and also studied the association of demographic characteristics with parenting behaviour. From the findings, it can be concluded that mothers of adolescents showed more verbosity and over reactivity while parenting adolescents. On the other hand, fathers showed more laxness towards adolescents in their parenting behaviour. A significant association between the demographic variable 'number of children' and self-perceived parenting behaviour was also found in the study. From the study, it is obvious that both the father and mother have different parenting practises and different perceptions about parenting behaviour. Mothers tend to take more responsibility for their adolescents and practise harsh parenting in comparison to fathers. Self-perceived parenting insists on parents providing quality parenting even in tough situations and can assist adolescents in overcoming problems and making positive adjustments in later life as well.

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