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Parenting Styles and Their Influence on Adolescent Self-Esteem: The Role of Communication, Emotional Support and Family Relationships

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Abstract

Adolescence is a crucial stage of human development characterised by significant physical, emotional, psychological and social changes. During this period, the family environment and parenting practices play an important role in shaping an individual's personality, confidence and self-esteem. Parenting styles influence how adolescents perceive themselves, develop relationships and respond to social situations. This article examines the relationship between different parenting styles and self-esteem among adolescents, with particular attention to authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting. It also explores the role of parental communication, emotional support, acceptance, discipline and family relationships in adolescent development. In the contemporary context, changing family structures, academic pressure, peer influence and digital media have created additional challenges for parents and teenagers. The article adopts a descriptive and analytical approach based on secondary sources, including books, research publications and relevant academic literature. It highlights the importance of supportive parenting, effective communication, mutual respect and appropriate parental guidance in promoting healthy self-esteem. The article concludes that balanced parenting practices, which combine emotional warmth with reasonable discipline and independence, can contribute positively to adolescents' psychological and emotional development.

Keywords: Parenting styles, self-esteem, adolescence, authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting, emotional support, parent-adolescent relationship, family environment, communication

Introduction

Parenting is one of the most important factors influencing the overall development of an individual. Parents provide children with emotional support, protection, guidance, discipline and opportunities for learning. The nature of parental behaviour and interaction can significantly influence children's personality, social relationships and psychological development. Among the different stages of human development, adolescence is particularly important because it involves major physical, emotional, cognitive and social changes.

Adolescence is a period during which individuals gradually develop their identity,

independence and understanding of their abilities. During this stage, self-esteem becomes an important aspect of psychological development. Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of personal worth, abilities and self-acceptance. Adolescents with healthy self-esteem are generally better equipped to develop positive relationships, manage challenges and make decisions with confidence. In contrast, low self-esteem may be associated with insecurity, self-doubt, social withdrawal and emotional difficulties.

The family environment plays an important role in shaping an adolescent's self-perception. Parents influence children's development through their communication patterns, expectations, disciplinary practices, emotional availability and level of involvement. Supportive parenting can help adolescents feel accepted, respected and valued. On the other hand, excessive control, continuous criticism, emotional neglect and unrealistic expectations may negatively influence their confidence and self-worth.

Baumrind's research on parental authority introduced important distinctions between parenting approaches, while subsequent work by Maccoby and Martin developed a broader framework based on parental responsiveness and demandingness. These approaches provide a useful foundation for understanding how parenting practices relate to adolescent development.

In Kerala, changes in family structures, increasing academic expectations, working-parent arrangements, migration and the influence of digital technology have transformed parent-adolescent relationships. Although parents continue to provide education and material support, maintaining emotional connections and understanding adolescent needs can be challenging.

Therefore, examining parenting styles in relation to adolescent self-esteem is important for understanding how family relationships contribute to psychological development. The present article discusses the major parenting styles and examines the role of communication, emotional support, parental acceptance and family relationships in shaping adolescent self-esteem.

Review of Literature

The relationship between parenting and adolescent development has been widely discussed in developmental psychology. Several theoretical contributions explain how parental behaviour, emotional support and family relationships influence children's psychological development.

Parenting Styles and Parental Authority

Baumrind (1971) examined different patterns of parental authority and their relationship with child development. Her work established an important foundation for understanding parenting

styles, particularly the distinction between authoritative and authoritarian approaches. These concepts highlight the importance of balancing parental control with emotional support and appropriate independence.

Maccoby and Martin (1983) further developed the understanding of parenting styles by examining two major dimensions: parental responsiveness and parental demandingness. Their framework contributed to the classification of parenting into four broad categories: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful.

Self-Esteem and Adolescent Development

Rosenberg (1965), in *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*, examined the development and measurement of self-esteem among adolescents. His work provides an important foundation for understanding how family experiences and social environments influence an individual's perception of personal worth.

Self-esteem is not developed independently of the social environment. Family relationships, parental expectations, acceptance and interpersonal experiences can contribute to the way adolescents evaluate themselves.

Attachment and Emotional Security

Bowlby (1969) emphasised the importance of early emotional relationships between children and their caregivers. Attachment theory provides a useful perspective for understanding how emotional security and parental availability contribute to later interpersonal relationships. During adolescence, supportive family relationships can continue to provide a sense of belonging and emotional security.

Parenting and Adolescent Psychological Development

Steinberg (2014) discussed the developmental changes associated with adolescence and the importance of understanding teenagers' changing emotional, social and cognitive needs. Adolescents gradually seek independence while continuing to require parental guidance and support. This makes balanced parenting particularly important during this stage.

Family Environment and Social Development

Bronfenbrenner (1979), through ecological systems theory, explained that human development is influenced by different environmental systems, including family, school, peer

groups and wider society. This perspective suggests that adolescent self-esteem should not be understood only through parenting styles but also through the broader social and cultural environment in which adolescents grow.

The reviewed literature provides a theoretical foundation for examining the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent self-esteem. It also highlights the importance of considering communication, emotional security and social experiences when understanding adolescent development.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is a sensitive developmental period during which individuals experience changes in identity, confidence, emotional needs and social relationships. During this stage, parental behaviour and family relationships can influence how adolescents understand and evaluate themselves.

However, parents may adopt different approaches to discipline, communication, emotional support and independence. Some parents provide warmth and guidance, while others may rely on strict control, excessive freedom or limited emotional involvement. These differences may create different experiences for adolescents and influence their self-esteem.

In contemporary society, academic competition, peer pressure, social media, changing family structures and generation gaps have created additional challenges in parent-adolescent relationships. Some adolescents experience high parental expectations, frequent criticism or limited opportunities to express their opinions. Such experiences may affect their confidence, self-acceptance and sense of personal value.

Therefore, it is important to examine how different parenting styles are associated with adolescent self-esteem and identify the family practices that may support healthy psychological development.

Need and Significance of the Study

Self-esteem is an important aspect of adolescent psychological development. It influences how individuals perceive their abilities, respond to difficulties, develop social relationships and make personal decisions.

The study is significant because parenting practices are among the important family-related factors that may contribute to the development of adolescent self-esteem. Understanding the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem can help parents recognise the importance of emotional support, reasonable discipline and positive communication.

The article is also relevant to teachers, counsellors, psychologists and educational institutions. It may help create awareness about the importance of family relationships in adolescent development and encourage the development of parenting awareness programmes, counselling services and family support initiatives.

Furthermore, examining the topic in the context of changing family and social environments in Kerala can provide a useful perspective on the challenges faced by contemporary parents and adolescents.

Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the article are:

1. To examine the different parenting styles and their characteristics.
2. To understand the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem among adolescents.
3. To analyse the role of parental acceptance, emotional support and communication in shaping adolescent self-esteem.
4. To examine the possible influence of parental control, criticism and neglect on adolescent self-perception.
5. To identify parenting practices that may promote healthy self-esteem and emotional development among adolescents.

Research Methodology

The present article adopts a descriptive and analytical research approach based on secondary sources of information. It examines the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent self-esteem through existing theoretical perspectives, academic publications and relevant literature.

Secondary information is considered from books, research articles, developmental psychology literature and publications related to parenting, family relationships and adolescent development. Important theoretical contributions include Baumrind's work on parenting styles, Maccoby and Martin's framework of parental responsiveness and demandingness, Rosenberg's work on self-esteem and Bowlby's attachment theory.

The article focuses primarily on adolescents and examines the influence of parental warmth, control, communication, acceptance and emotional involvement on their self-perception and psychological development.

The study also considers the contemporary family environment, particularly changing

parental expectations, academic pressure, digital influence and the challenges of maintaining healthy parent-adolescent relationships.

As the article is based on secondary information, it does not claim to present original survey findings or statistically measured relationships. The discussion and conclusions are developed through an analytical interpretation of the reviewed literature.

Understanding the Different Parenting Styles

Parenting styles refer to the general approaches parents use when raising their children. These approaches include the level of emotional support, parental control, communication, discipline and freedom provided to children.

The four commonly discussed parenting styles are authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting.

Authoritative Parenting

Authoritative parenting is characterised by high parental warmth, clear expectations, reasonable discipline and open communication. Parents adopting this style provide guidance while allowing adolescents to express their opinions and gradually develop independence.

This parenting approach encourages mutual respect, emotional support and responsible decision-making. Adolescents may feel more accepted and confident because their opinions and feelings are recognised by their parents.

Authoritative parenting is generally associated with positive developmental outcomes, including emotional adjustment, social competence and healthy self-perception. However, the effects of parenting practices may also vary according to individual and cultural circumstances.

Authoritarian Parenting

Authoritarian parenting is characterised by strict rules, high parental control and limited opportunities for discussion. Parents following this approach often expect obedience and may rely heavily on punishment, criticism or rigid discipline.

Although rules and discipline are important for adolescent development, excessive control without emotional understanding may create fear, insecurity and communication difficulties.

Adolescents raised in highly controlling environments may find it difficult to express their feelings, make independent decisions or develop confidence in their abilities. However, outcomes may vary depending on the nature and context of parental discipline.

Permissive Parenting

Permissive parenting involves high emotional warmth but relatively low parental control and fewer behavioural boundaries. Parents following this approach may provide considerable freedom and avoid strict disciplinary measures.

Such an environment can encourage adolescents to express themselves and feel emotionally accepted. However, insufficient guidance and inconsistent boundaries may create difficulties in developing self-discipline, responsibility and decision-making skills.

Therefore, emotional support should be combined with appropriate guidance and reasonable expectations.

Neglectful or Uninvolved Parenting

Neglectful parenting is characterised by low emotional involvement and limited parental supervision or support. Parents may provide insufficient attention to the emotional, social and developmental needs of their children.

Adolescents require emotional security, encouragement and parental guidance during their development. A lack of these elements may contribute to feelings of isolation, rejection and insecurity.

Limited parental involvement may also reduce opportunities for adolescents to discuss personal challenges and receive emotional support. This parenting approach is therefore considered a potential risk factor for healthy psychological development.

The Role of Parenting Styles in Shaping Adolescent Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is influenced by several personal, social and environmental factors. Among these, the family environment plays an important role because parents are often the primary source of emotional support, guidance and early social learning.

Parental Acceptance and Emotional Support

Parental acceptance helps adolescents feel valued and respected within the family. When parents recognise their children’s abilities, appreciate their efforts and provide emotional encouragement, adolescents may develop a more positive understanding of themselves.

In contrast, continuous rejection, comparison and criticism may create feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Emotional support can therefore play an important role in developing a healthy sense of self-worth.

Communication and Parent-Adolescent Relationships

Communication is an essential part of a healthy parent-adolescent relationship. Open and respectful communication allows teenagers to express their thoughts, emotions and concerns without fear of immediate criticism or punishment.

Parents who practise active listening and respond with patience can create an environment of trust and emotional security. Such interactions may help adolescents feel understood and respected.

However, communication should not be limited to giving instructions or controlling behaviour. It should also involve listening, understanding individual experiences and recognising the emotional needs of adolescents.

Parental Expectations and Academic Pressure

Academic achievement is often considered an important measure of success. Parents naturally want their children to perform well, but unrealistic expectations and continuous comparisons may create psychological pressure.

When parental approval depends mainly on academic performance, adolescents may begin to associate their personal worth with marks, ranks and achievements.

Encouragement, realistic expectations and recognition of individual abilities can help adolescents develop confidence without experiencing unnecessary pressure.

Parental Control and Independence

Adolescence is a stage in which individuals gradually develop independence and personal identity. Parents must balance supervision with opportunities for independent thinking and decision-making.

Excessive control may limit adolescents' ability to express their opinions and develop confidence in their decisions. On the other hand, complete freedom without appropriate guidance may create difficulties in understanding responsibilities and boundaries.

A balanced approach that combines guidance, trust and reasonable freedom can support the development of autonomy and self-confidence.

Family Environment and Emotional Security

The overall family atmosphere can influence how adolescents understand relationships and

evaluate themselves. Families characterised by mutual respect, emotional support and cooperation can provide a secure environment for personal development.

Frequent conflicts, harsh criticism, emotional neglect and lack of attention may create stress and insecurity. Therefore, maintaining a supportive family environment is important for promoting healthy adolescent development.

Emerging Challenges in Contemporary Parenting

Modern parenting is influenced by changing social conditions, technological development and evolving family expectations. These changes have created new challenges for maintaining healthy parent-adolescent relationships.

Digital Media and Social Media Influence

Social media has become an important part of adolescent life. Teenagers use digital platforms for communication, entertainment, education and social interaction.

However, continuous exposure to online comparisons, unrealistic lifestyles and social approval through likes and comments may influence adolescents' self-perception.

Parents should develop awareness of digital behaviour while avoiding unnecessary restrictions. Open conversations about online experiences, privacy and responsible digital use can provide better guidance.

Peer Pressure and Social Acceptance

During adolescence, peer relationships become increasingly important. Teenagers often seek acceptance and recognition from friends and social groups.

Peer pressure may influence appearance, behaviour, lifestyle choices and academic decisions. Parents should provide a supportive environment in which adolescents can discuss these experiences and develop confidence in their individual identity.

Academic Competition and Parental Expectations

Increasing academic competition can create pressure among adolescents. Excessive expectations, comparisons with other students and criticism of poor performance may negatively affect confidence.

Parents should recognise individual differences in interests, abilities and learning styles. Emotional encouragement and constructive guidance are important alongside academic support.

Generation Gap and Changing Family Relationships

Differences in values, attitudes and experiences between parents and teenagers may create misunderstandings. Modern adolescents are exposed to different cultural influences, digital environments and social expectations.

Parents may sometimes interpret the desire for independence as disobedience, while teenagers may interpret parental guidance as unnecessary control.

Mutual understanding, patience and respectful communication can help reduce these differences.

Changing Family Structures and Parental Availability

Nuclear families, working parents, migration and changing employment patterns have influenced family interactions. Although these arrangements differ across households, limited time for meaningful interaction can sometimes reduce opportunities for emotional communication.

Parents should make an effort to maintain regular interaction and emotional involvement, even when professional and personal responsibilities are demanding.

Discussion

The relationship between parenting styles and adolescent self-esteem is complex and influenced by several interconnected factors. Parenting practices shape the emotional and social environment in which adolescents develop their identity and understanding of personal worth.

Authoritative parenting provides a balance between emotional warmth and appropriate discipline. This approach can create opportunities for adolescents to express themselves, develop independence and feel accepted within the family.

Authoritarian parenting, when characterised by excessive control and limited emotional responsiveness, may restrict communication and independent decision-making. Permissive parenting may provide emotional acceptance but can sometimes lack the boundaries required for developing responsibility. Neglectful parenting may create difficulties because adolescents receive limited emotional support and guidance.

However, parenting styles should not be understood as fixed categories that determine every adolescent outcome. Individual personality, cultural background, peer relationships, school environment and socioeconomic circumstances may also influence self-esteem.

In the Kerala context, changing family patterns, academic expectations and digital influences make the relationship between parents and adolescents particularly important. Parents

may provide educational opportunities and material facilities while still facing difficulties in understanding their children's emotional needs.

Therefore, effective parenting should focus on more than discipline and academic achievement. It should include emotional availability, positive communication, mutual respect and opportunities for adolescents to develop independence.

The discussion highlights the importance of balanced parenting practices that recognise adolescents as developing individuals with their own feelings, opinions and abilities.

Recommendations

Based on the theoretical discussion, the following recommendations may help promote healthy self-esteem among adolescents:

1. **Encourage positive communication:** Parents should provide opportunities for teenagers to express their feelings and opinions without fear of unnecessary criticism.
2. **Provide emotional support:** Parents should recognise their children's emotional needs and offer encouragement during difficult situations.
3. **Avoid unnecessary comparison:** Comparing adolescents with siblings, classmates or other children may create feelings of inadequacy. Parents should appreciate individual abilities and progress.
4. **Maintain balanced discipline:** Rules and expectations should be reasonable, consistent and explained clearly rather than imposed through fear.
5. **Promote independence:** Adolescents should receive appropriate opportunities to make decisions, accept responsibilities and develop confidence in their abilities.
6. **Recognise individual differences:** Parents should understand that every adolescent has different interests, abilities, personalities and developmental needs.
7. **Develop digital awareness:** Parents should guide adolescents towards responsible social media use and healthy online behaviour.
8. **Promote parenting awareness programmes:** Educational institutions and counselling centres should organise programmes that help parents understand adolescent psychology and positive parenting practices.
9. **Strengthen family relationships:** Spending meaningful time together and participating in family activities can improve emotional connections.
10. **Provide professional support when necessary:** Counselling and psychological support should be encouraged when adolescents experience persistent emotional or self-esteem

difficulties.

Scope and Limitations

Scope

The article focuses on the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent self-esteem. It examines the four major parenting styles and discusses the influence of parental acceptance, communication, emotional support, discipline and independence on adolescent development.

The discussion also considers contemporary challenges such as academic pressure, digital media, peer influence and changing family relationships, with particular relevance to the Kerala social context.

Limitations

The article is based on secondary sources and does not include original fieldwork or primary survey data. Therefore, it does not establish statistical relationships between specific parenting styles and self-esteem levels among adolescents in Kerala.

The discussion is based on selected theoretical contributions and academic literature rather than a systematic review of every available publication. Furthermore, parenting practices and adolescent experiences may vary according to cultural background, socioeconomic conditions, family structure and individual differences.

Future empirical studies are required to examine these relationships in specific populations and geographical settings.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further research may examine the relationship between different parenting styles and adolescent self-esteem across various districts of Kerala. Comparative studies between rural and urban families may help identify differences in parental practices and adolescent experiences.

Researchers may also investigate gender differences, socioeconomic backgrounds, family structures and the influence of parental education on parenting practices.

Additional studies could examine the relationship between social media use, peer pressure, academic expectations and self-esteem among adolescents. Longitudinal research may provide a better understanding of how parenting practices and self-esteem change throughout adolescence.

Future research may also examine the effectiveness of parenting awareness programmes, family counselling and school-based interventions in promoting healthy self-esteem.

Conclusion

Parenting plays an important role in shaping the emotional, social and psychological development of adolescents. The different parenting styles adopted by parents can influence how teenagers perceive themselves, develop confidence and establish relationships with others.

Authoritative parenting, which combines emotional warmth, appropriate discipline and opportunities for independence, provides a useful framework for understanding supportive parenting practices. In contrast, excessive control, insufficient boundaries and limited emotional involvement may create challenges for adolescent development.

Self-esteem is influenced not only by parenting styles but also by peer relationships, school experiences, social environments and individual characteristics. Therefore, the development of healthy self-esteem requires a supportive environment involving parents, educational institutions and the wider community.

In the contemporary context, effective parenting should move beyond providing material facilities and controlling behaviour. It should focus on understanding adolescents, respecting their individuality, offering emotional support and encouraging responsible independence.

Ultimately, a balanced combination of love, guidance, communication and mutual respect can contribute to the development of confident, emotionally secure and responsible individuals. Parents play an important role not only in raising adolescents but also in helping them recognise their abilities, accept themselves and develop a positive sense of personal worth.

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