

Emotional Adjustment of Parents and Quality of Parent-Teen Relationships

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ABSTRACT A sample of 400 respondents (100 of each fathers, mothers, sons and daughters) from middle and upper-middle class nuclear families were examined for role of emotional maturity of parents in determining quality of the parent-teen relationships. Parent child relationship scales and social adjustment inventory was used for assessment. It was found that emotionally well-adjusted fathers were significantly more accepting, had more positive influence of their good marital relations on their teenagers and had more realistic role expectations from their sons and daughters. Sons perceived moderately maladjusted fathers as significantly indifferent however, daughters perceived them as significantly physically punishing. On the other hand, emotionally well-adjusted and moderately adjusted mothers did not differ in their perceptions. Sons and daughters also perceived their emotionally adjusted and moderately maladjusted mothers as similar on all the dimensions of parent-child relationship scale. Emotional adjustment of fathers contributed significantly in improving the quality of father-son relationship.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of parent child relationship reaches crucial stage when a youngster attains teenage. The emotional storminess of the teenagers is difficult for both parents and the teens. Fast social changes, complexities around them affect adolescent's psychological development and any kind of deprivation in the family adds still more confusion. With time and patience, parents can assure that this period is rich and rewarding for the family. Research has indicated substantial evidence that high levels of parental involvement significantly affect adolescent well-being (Lecroy 1988; Richards et al. 1991; Dasgupta and Basu 2002 and Mathur and Pareek 2003).

The difficulties faced by youth as well as children are giving rise to many psycho-somatic problems such as anxiety, tension, frustration and emotional upsets in day to day life. So, the study of emotional maturity is now emerging as a descriptive science. It deals with the interplay of forces with intensities and quantities. Emotional adjustment is a process in which the personality

is continuously striving for greater sense of emotional health, both intra-psychically and intra-personality. An emotionally mature person has the capacity to withstand delay in satisfaction of needs. He has the ability to tolerate a reasonable amount of frustration. He believes in long-term planning and is capable of delaying or revising his expectations in terms of demands of the situations.

It has been found that emotionally well-adjusted persons are quick to establish affectionate relations with others. A relationship between depressed emotional state and ineffective parenting has been supported by Radke et al. (1988). Mature people can cope with marriage, illness, divorce, parenthood, careers and unemployment. Emotional maturity is a prerequisite for long-term happiness. Emotional immaturity is associated with entanglements, transferences and unsatisfying shallow relationships. Keys to emotional maturity are relationship clarity, a stable sense of integrity and self-acceptance. The parents who are emotionally healthy and are mature enough to handle various emotional states without disturbing their relationship with their children follow authoritative style of parenting. Parents with high emotional maturity are better able to handle problems of their teens and hence have better relationships with their teenagers. Parents who use low level of assertion and high levels of warmth and inductive discipline and who encourage partici-

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pation in family decision making, have morally mature children (Boyes and Allen 1993; Parikh 1980). Walker and Taylor (1991) reported that parents who created a supportive atmosphere by listening sensitively, clarifying questions, presenting higher level of reasoning and using praise and humor had children who gained in moral understanding as they grew from early childhood to late adolescence. In contrast, the parents who lectured, used threats or made sarcastic remarks had children who remained low in moral judgement. Parents who are able to take a calm, sympathetic but firm approach maintain good relationship with teens most of the time. Parents' own ability to act maturely and to maintain emotional balance plays an important role. Keeping this in view the present study was carried out with the following objectives

- to study parent-teen relationships as perceived by parents and their teenage sons and daughters across various levels of emotional adjustment.
- to ascertain the contribution of parents' emotional adjustment in determining the quality of parent-teen relationship across two sexes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Locale: Families for the present study were purposively selected from four zones of Ludhiana city. These families were nuclear families from middle and upper- middle class where both parents were at least graduate and were working and had one teenaged son and teenaged daughter between 13-19 years of age. The target sample in each family was father, mother, son and daughter. Thus, the present study was based upon a total sample size of 400 respondents (100 of each fathers, mothers, sons and daughters).

Sample Selection: A list of government and semi-government organizations such as banks, offices and educational institutions located in these four different zones of Ludhiana was prepared from head offices/concerned departments of the respective institutions. The heads of the respective organizations were approached and objectives, implications and utility of present work were discussed. Middle and upper- middle class nuclear families were selected as per selection criteria set for the present study from these institutions. Necessary care was taken to choose the sample of 100 families proportionally from all

the zones and across all the institutions so as to avoid clustering of sample to one particular zone or institution.

Research Instruments: A self-constructed socio-demographic questionnaire was used to identify families that fulfilled the inclusion criteria set for the present study. Socio-Economic Scale (Bhardwaj 2001) was used to identify families with middle and upper-middle socio-economic status. Parent-Child Relationship scale by Sharma and Chauhan (2002) was used to assess the quality of parent-child relationship as perceived by parents on eight dichotomous dimensions of parenting. Relationship of teenage sons and daughters with their parents was assessed by using Parent Child Relationship Scale by Rao (2001). Social Adjustment Inventory by Deva (1990) was administered to assess emotional adjustment of the parents. The collected data was classified and tabulated in accordance with the objectives of the study. The data was statistically analysed by using t-test, z- test and Multiple Linear Regression.

Data Collection: The investigator approached the selected families at their homes. Before administering various tools, respondents were explained the aim and relevance of the present study and were assured that the information given by them would be kept strictly confidential. They were requested to answer objectively and without discussing the responses among themselves, so that information reflects reality. Necessary care was taken not to suggest or give direction or indicate investigator's bias. The tools were answered by all the respondents of the selected families independently in the presence of the investigator.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 depicts percentage distribution of parents across three levels of emotional adjustment. It is evident from the table that majority of fathers (75%) and mothers (85%) were found emotionally well-adjusted. Further, twenty-five per cent of fathers and fifteen per cent of mothers were found moderately maladjusted and none of the fathers and mothers was found less adjusted. In the present study emotional maturity of the parents could be related to the education of the parents. Goal of education is to make people socially responsible and emotionally mature. More the person is educated better is his reason-

ing ability and thinking power and more he is open to ideas and suggestions related to betterment of life. Therefore, it may be stated that as parents of this study were well educated, their education played an important role in determining their emotional adjustment .

Perception of emotionally well-adjusted and moderately adjusted fathers regarding their relationship with sons and daughters is depicted in table 2. The table projects that out of eight dimensions emotionally well-adjusted fathers differed significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) on three dimensions. For both sons and daughters emotionally well adjusted fathers were found significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) more accepting (8.23 and 8.43), had more positive influence of their good marital relations on their teenagers (7.75 and 7.28) and had more realistic role expectations (8.72 and 8.76) from their sons and daughters. Acceptance by fathers indicates positive attitude and their loving, affectionate and attentive behaviour towards their children. Devgan (1998) in his study suggested that most of educated parents follow ideal practices to form good behaviour of their children. The tendency of controlling undesirable behaviour by making the child understand with love

and affection increases with increase in educational level. Being emotionally mature fathers also projected mutual understanding and companionship with their partners. Dasgupta and Basu (2002) reported that parent-adolescent relationship and marital adjustment between spouses are closely interrelated. In the present study emotional maturity may have played an important role in determining good marital relations thereby improving father-child relationship by minimising the intensity of conflicts between spouses and their children. Huxley (2006) described that emotionally healthy parents showed patience, did not enforce physical punishment, value autonomy, were warm and provided rationales and explanations for rules they set to follow.

This table further depicts that emotionally well adjusted fathers were found to have more utopian expectations (7.28) from their daughters as compared to moderately adjusted fathers. The reason for high quality performance from their daughters could be that fathers want to keep their daughters at par with sons. There is a positive change in the attitude of parents towards their daughters especially in urban nuclear families.

Table 1: Per cent distribution of parents across various levels of emotional adjustment

S. No.	Level of emotional adjustment	Parent category				Z-value
		Father		Mother		
		f	%	f	%	
1.	Well adjusted	75	75.00	85	85.00	1.768
2.	Moderately adjusted	25	25.00	15	15.00	1.768
3.	Less adjusted	0	0.00	0	0.00	-

Table 2: Difference in the mean scores of father’s perception of relationship towards sons and daughters across two categories of emotional adjustment

S. No.	Dimensions of PCR	Father’s emotional adjustment									
		Fathers’ perception for sons					Fathers’ perception for daughters				
		Well adjusted (n=75)		Moderately adjusted (n=25)		t-value	Well adjusted (n=75)		Moderately adjusted (n=25)		t-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1.	Acceptance	8.23	1.71	7.40	1.89	2.042*	8.43	1.60	7.48	1.64	2.543*
2.	Over protection	7.20	1.59	6.80	1.73	1.067	7.52	1.64	6.92	1.71	1.569
3.	Over-indulgence	6.40	1.54	6.80	1.38	1.151	6.52	1.53	6.56	1.33	0.117
4.	Utopian-expectation	7.19	1.67	6.64	2.18	1.312	7.28	1.69	6.28	2.21	2.366*
5.	Severe moralism	7.00	1.52	6.32	1.86	1.824	7.09	1.61	6.32	2.08	1.927
6.	Severe discipline	6.68	1.61	6.48	1.71	0.529	6.76	1.68	6.36	2.12	0.962
7.	Marital adjustment	7.75	1.71	6.64	1.82	2.785*	7.79	1.77	6.36	1.89	3.438*
8.	Realistic role expectation	8.72	0.92	7.16	2.49	4.588*	8.76	0.96	7.44	1.85	4.622*

* Significant ($p < 0.05$)

Saraswati and Pai (1997) were of opinion that with increase in urbanization, education and mass media, girls have begun to assert their identities via their academic and educational goals and gender discrimination is on the decline. Agarwal (1997) while studying differences in the parental encouragement on the basis of sex concluded that parents encouraged their daughters more than sons to achieve higher academic goals in life. Overall success ratio between girls and boys has demonstrated outstanding performance and better achievements by the girls than boys. This could have led the fathers to have higher expectations from their daughters.

Table 3 projects mothers' perception of their relationship with sons and daughters across eight dimensions of parent-child relationship and across two levels of emotional adjustment. The

table describes that emotionally well-adjusted and moderately adjusted mothers did not differ in their perception across all the dimensions. It is further evident that even moderately adjusted mothers were at par with emotionally well-adjusted mothers as far as parenting practices were concerned.

Table 4 describes how emotionally well adjusted and moderately maladjusted fathers were perceived across various dimensions of parenting by their sons and daughters. It was observed that moderately maladjusted fathers were found significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) indifferent (27.96) and more symbolically rewarding (38.96) and object rewarding (35.92) for their sons. It indicates that moderately maladjusted fathers used passive parenting style and had unconcerned and apathetic attitude towards needs of their teenage sons. The table further depicts impact of emotional

Table 3: Difference in the mean scores of mother's perception of relationship towards sons and daughters across two levels of emotional adjustment

S. No.	Dimensions of PCR		Father's emotional adjustment								
			Mothers' perception for sons				Mothers' perception for daughters				
			Well adjusted (n=85)		Moderately adjusted (n=15)		Well adjusted (n=85)		Moderately adjusted (n=15)		t-value
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1.	Acceptance	8.18	1.51	7.07	2.19	1.310	8.25	1.60	7.87	2.00	0.819
2.	Over protection	7.26	1.75	7.47	1.46	0.257	7.42	1.62	7.07	1.94	0.763
3.	Over-indulgence	6.44	1.69	6.87	1.73	0.277	6.51	1.56	6.67	0.90	0.388
4.	Utopian-expectation	7.21	1.46	7.27	1.87	1.359	7.12	1.71	6.53	2.64	1.116
5.	Severe moralism	6.86	1.60	6.73	1.39	0.247	6.91	1.62	6.87	2.47	0.079
6.	Severe discipline	6.39	1.63	6.73	1.79	0.094	6.62	1.87	6.87	1.36	0.481
7.	Marital adjustment	7.74	1.48	7.07	1.67	1.101	7.55	1.78	6.73	2.37	1.558
8.	Realistic role expectation	8.53	1.31	7.40	1.84	1.564	8.53	1.16	7.87	2.13	1.761

* Significant ($p < 0.05$)

Table 4: Difference in the mean scores of perception of sons' and daughters' relationship with emotionally well adjusted and moderately adjusted fathers

S. No.	Dimensions of PCR		Father's emotional adjustment								
			Sons' Perception for sons				Daughter's Perception for daughters				
			Well adjusted (n=75)		Moderately adjusted (n=25)		Well adjusted (n=75)		Moderately adjusted (n=25)		t-value
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1.	Protecting	37.72	5.47	39.12	4.43	1.158	39.87	5.50	38.04	5.86	1.416
2.	Symbolic Punishment	29.05	5.64	29.44	6.15	0.290	27.71	7.37	28.80	5.92	0.672
3.	Rejecting	19.35	5.39	20.56	8.48	0.836	18.61	6.39	19.88	7.48	0.822
4.	Object Punishment	21.60	6.89	21.24	8.60	0.212	17.35	6.17	20.84	7.19	2.351*
5.	Demanding	31.72	7.23	32.20	6.55	0.294	29.75	8.77	31.88	6.86	1.107
6.	Indifferent	24.71	5.72	27.96	6.01	2.433*	25.29	6.15	25.12	5.02	0.127
7.	Symbolic Reward	35.55	7.24	38.96	5.93	2.130*	37.67	7.19	37.64	6.59	0.016
8.	Loving	36.41	7.02	39.32	6.82	1.860	37.64	6.84	35.96	5.76	1.104
9.	Object Reward	30.79	7.59	35.92	7.27	2.959*	30.89	8.14	31.72	6.45	0.461
10.	Neglecting	21.19	6.34	22.40	7.81	0.781	20.57	5.71	20.24	6.35	0.246

* Significant ($p < 0.05$)

maturity on punishing behaviour of fathers for daughters. Mean score for well-adjusted fathers was found less (17.35) as compared to the mean score of maladjusted fathers (20.84). This indicates that moderately maladjusted fathers gave significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) more physical punishment to their daughters than emotionally well-adjusted fathers. The results could be related to the fact that emotional maladjustment indicates emotional immaturity of an individual which leads to various conflicting situations inside and outside home and also increases stress level of an individual. Using more physical punishment could be an outlet for their frustrations. Less emotional maturity could also lead to conflicting marital relations which in turn could make fathers more aggressive and hostile against daughters as daughters tend to identify themselves with mothers. Hightower (1990) found significant positive relationship between emotional and mental health of parents and reasonable parental control. This indicates that better the emotional health of the parents more reasonable is the control. Similar findings have been found in the present study where less

emotionally adjusted fathers were found more physically punishing.

Table 5 depicts difference in perception of sons and daughters for emotionally well adjusted and moderately maladjusted mothers. Mean values across all the dimensions indicated that well-adjusted and moderately adjusted mothers were perceived as similar on all the dimensions by sons and daughters. Mothers were able to keep a balance in their attitude towards their sons and daughters even if they were moderately immature. This also indicated that mothers were better able to handle their emotional weaknesses as they kept their attitude positive towards their teenaged children.

Table 6 indicates contribution of emotional adjustment of parents in determining quality of their relationship with teenage children. It was found that emotional adjustment of fathers contributed positively and significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) in improving the quality of their relationship with their sons. The results emphasize that fathers need to be more sensitive about this issue. Being role models for their sons, fathers must under-

Table 5: Difference in the mean scores of perception of sons' and daughters' relationship with emotionally well adjusted and moderately adjusted mothers

S. No.	Dimensions of PCR		Father's emotional adjustment								
			Sons' perception for sons				Daughter's perception for daughters				
			Well adjusted (n=85)		Moderately adjusted (n=15)		Well adjusted (n=85)		Moderately adjusted (n=15)		t-value
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1.	Protecting	40.33	5.02	39.40	3.36	0.689	41.13	5.69	41.93	3.86	0.525
2.	Symbolic Punishment	30.36	5.94	31.20	4.23	0.521	30.65	6.15	29.00	3.76	1.002
3.	Rejecting	18.96	6.88	21.33	5.54	1.262	18.85	6.42	17.33	6.95	0.832
4.	Object Punishment	21.45	7.03	24.73	7.45	1.655	19.56	6.95	20.27	5.96	0.368
5.	Demanding	31.72	6.92	34.53	6.46	1.467	31.54	8.02	32.53	4.97	0.463
6.	Indifferent	26.22	5.58	27.33	7.08	0.681	26.31	5.42	23.40	6.17	1.876
7.	Symbolic Reward	37.28	7.07	37.00	6.05	0.145	37.49	6.53	40.07	4.85	1.455
8.	Loving	38.35	7.00	38.73	4.71	0.202	39.02	6.49	38.87	6.52	0.086
9.	Object Reward	32.80	7.90	33.13	6.51	0.154	31.95	6.90	32.27	8.26	0.158
10.	Neglecting	20.14	6.26	21.87	7.73	0.950	19.91	5.55	17.87	5.24	1.322

* Significant ($p < 0.05$)

Table 6: Regression analysis of parent-teen relationship with emotional adjustment as perceived by teenage sons & daughters

S. No.	Independent variables	Regression coefficient 'β'	Standard error of 'β'	't' value	R ² - values
1.	Son - Father	0.778	0.291	2.676*	0.047
2.	Daughter - Father	0.194	0.312	0.623 ^{NS}	0.000
3.	Son - Mother	-0.235	0.301	0.780 ^{NS}	0.000
4.	Daughter - mother	0.546	0.295	1.852 ^{NS}	0.005

* Significant ($p < 0.05$)

stand that acts of emotional immaturity displayed in terms of excessive physical punishment, indifferent attitude and unrealistic expectations deteriorate the quality of relationship with their sons.

It is summarized that sons and daughters perceived their emotionally adjusted and moderately maladjusted mothers as similar on all the dimensions of parenting whereas, moderately maladjusted fathers were perceived as more indifferent and rewarding by sons and more physically punishing by their daughters. Emotional adjustment of fathers contributed significantly in improving the quality of father-son relationship.

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