

Disagreements in Parent-Adolescent Relationship: A Comparison in Middle Class Families and Lower Class Families

Ruchi Saxena*, Nalini Srivastava** and Rekha Naithani*

**H. N. B. Garhwal University, Srinagar, Uttrakhand, India*

***M.J.P. University, Bareilly, Uttar Prdaesh, India*

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ABSTRACT The family and peers are two of the major social contexts of socio-emotional development for adolescents. Within the family context, three areas of research are notable: effects of parental warmth, consequences of parent-adolescent conflict, and timetable of establishing autonomy from parents. This study has discussed the difficulties that parents and adolescents have with each other and also the effect of these difficulties or expectations on their relationships. Finally process of resolving these disagreements with reference to individual/ family has been discussed. The population under study was selected through purposive sampling in which samples were chosen on the basis of their age group (adolescent, 14-17 years) and socio – economic status, that is, middle class families and lower class families. For this purpose, ten schools of middle and lower class families were visited and random selection of adolescent students have been done. Selection of parents was done through chit-system. The data were tabulated and analyzed in percentage form. Findings concluded that difference was found in parent-adolescent relationship in middle class and lower class families.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a time when a person is torn by conflicting feelings. On one hand, he is eager to be free, and on the other hand, he wants that there is always someone behind him who supports and takes care of him. Or he can strive for making decisions by himself, but consequences of his erroneous actions should be corrected by someone else. As a result, adolescents' strained necessities of autonomy and self-determination usually lead to various conflicts in the family.

According to all aforesaid, we can see that parent-adolescent relations, in particular parent-adolescent conflicts, are of great importance and should be examined thoroughly. Family plays an important role in formation of adolescent's identification and independence. Parents' aim is to help the adolescents to leave the childhood and to be ready to take adult responsibilities. The family and peers are two of the major social contexts of socio-emotional development for adolescents. Within the family context, three areas of research are notable: effects of parental warmth, consequences of parent-adolescent conflict; and timetable of establishing autonomy from parents. Much research has been conducted on

parental warmth. Parental warmth, expressed in both physical (for example, hugs and kisses) and verbal ways (for example, praise and expressions of fondness), has been found to be a universal phenomenon (Rohner 1986). It also seems to have a universal association with positive psychosocial outcomes, such as psychological well-being, self-esteem, and academic achievement. Lack of parental warmth appears to have a universal association with negative psychosocial outcomes, such as aggression, school misconduct, emotional unresponsiveness, and depressive symptoms (Greenberger and Chen 1996; Chen et al. 1998). Hegde and Gaonkar (1991) attempt to find out the perception of parental control by adolescents on different activities such as social, academic, leisure time, household activity as well as in terms of discipline and behaviour. 126 adolescents between the age group of 13-18 years are selected from high schools and colleges (63 male and 63 female). The required information was elicited from adolescent using a pre-tested questionnaire. The results indicate that female adolescent perception of parental control on social activity and household activity was significantly higher than for male adolescent, whereas boys perceive more control in academic activities. Further, adolescents from joint families perceive more control in social activities than adolescents from nuclear families. As children grow older, there is a relative decrease in warmth and intellectual stimulation

Address for correspondence:
Ms. Ruchi Saxena,
Hundal Khel, Singh Bhawani Gali,
Shahjahanpur 242 001,
Uttar Pradesh, India

from the parents and an increase in parental restriction. With adolescence the gap widens. Puberty brings a change in behavior which makes the pubescent child moody, irritable, secretive, uncooperative and quarrelsome. Unless parents recognize the relationship between such behavior and the changes that take place in the child's body at this time, they are likely to be lacking in understanding and sympathy. On the other hand, although conflicts are typical during this period, they are not necessarily problematic for these relationships. In fact, the majority of families with adolescents report satisfying relationships that are generally harmonious (Adams et al. 1989). Conflicts between adolescents and parents in most families are relatively infrequent, short lived, and mild in intensity (Montemayor 1986). When disagreements do occur, they tend to involve the normal, everyday events of family life, such as household chores, family rules, personal habits and choices, social relationships, and family obligations (Allison 1999; Montemayor 1983; Smetana 1989). Although arguments about major issues such as sex, drugs, religion, and politics are much less frequent during the early years of adolescence (Allison 1999; Montemayor 1983; Smetana and Asquith 1994), they are a real source of conflict for some families. A review of research suggests that conflict between parents and adolescents increases and peaks during the early years of adolescence and is associated with the onset of puberty (Holmbeck and Hill 1991; Steinberg 1988). Within the middle school years, several studies have found heightened levels of conflict to be most prevalent in grades six and/or seven, the transitional years between later childhood and adolescence (Allison 1999; Galambos and Almeida 1992; Smetana and Asquith 1994).

With keeping all the views in mind, this paper has discussed the disagreements in parent-adolescent relationship as well as the process of resolving these disagreements.

Objective of the Study

1. To develop insight into the nature of disagreements in parent-adolescent relationships (type, frequency, intensity).
2. To examine the process of resolving parent-adolescent relationship related disagreements with reference to – a. Individual, b. Family and c. Social-cultural domain

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Selection of Locale

The present study was carried out in the middle class families and lower class families of Bareilly city, of Uttar Pradesh State. The reasons for selecting this area were -

1. Need was found to conduct this research in this area.
2. Familiarity to the area and its approachability.

Sample and its Selection

The population under study was selected through purposive sampling in which samples were chosen on the basis of their age group (adolescent, 14-17 years) and socio – economic status, that is, middle class families and lower class families. Sample was divided into middle class and lower class on the basis of income, number of family members, type of family, type of dwelling etc. For this purpose, ten schools of middle and lower class families have been visited and random selection of adolescent students have been done. Selection of parents was done from selected adolescents parents' through chit-system.

For this study, 250 adolescent students and 50 parents from each of both the type of socio – economic status families of Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh have been selected separately. Thus, a total of 500 adolescent and 100 parents were selected for the study. Hence, the total size of the sample is 600 approximately.

Construction and Content of Research Tool

For preparing and selecting the research tool, literature pertaining to parent-adolescent relationship has been reviewed thoroughly.

The self constructed questionnaire for both the parents and adolescents were prepared after consulting a number of researches as well as according to need of the study. During preparation and selection of questionnaire, following views were kept in mind:-

- Content and its relevance to its objective.
- Clarity of questions.
- Understanding and simplicity of language.

Data Collection

For the data collection, 100 parents (50 parents from middle class families and 50 parents from lower class families) and 500 adolescents (250 from middle class families and 250 from lower class families) were surveyed. Parents and adolescents were made to fill the self-constructed questionnaire. Schools were selected on the basis of socio – economic status and easy accessibility. After receiving the permission from principals, often visits were made to select the sample. After random selection of the students, they were short listed for the division in middle class families and lower class families on the basis of monthly income, number of family members earning etc. After this division, parents were selected through chit. Questionnaires were distributed among parents as well as students both. Parents were contacted in parent teacher meeting and at home.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed both qualitatively as well as quantitatively. The data were tabulated and analyzed after completion of the collection of data. In case of qualitative data, notes taken in note pad were properly analyzed whereas quantitative data were presented in tables in percentage form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Table 1, majority of middle class society parents (56%) think that in a family all types of issues like family, school and society related are responsible for disagreements between parents and adolescents but in lower class families, majority of the parents (64%) think that family related issues are responsible for disagreements. Experts blame pushy parents for aggravating the stress caused by an already fault system of education (Times of India 2008). Table 2 analyses that middle class families' adolescents (54.8%) think school related issues are responsible for disagreement and 21.6% think all the three issues are behind the disagreement. In lower class families' adolescents, majority (57.2%) think that family related issues are responsible but 24.4% think society issues are main cause for disagreements between parents and adolescents. Through this data, it can be analysed that

in middle class families the reason for disagreement is mainly school related but in lower class families, this is because of family related issues. From the point of view of parents of middle class families, all types of disagreements happen but in lower class families, parents highlighted family related as well as society related issues more but from the point of view of adolescents. In middle class families, school related disagreements are highlighted but in lower class families, they ticked occurrence of family related issues of disagreements. Alim (1994) in a study showed that problems arose with regard to hair style, clothing and food habits. Socially, parents have problems with their adolescent children's choice of friends, their refusal to participate in social activities, and their quarreling with siblings.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of the parent respondents on the basis of the issues of the disagreements

S. No.	Particulars Issues of disagreements	Parents respondents N=100			
		Middle class N ₁ =50		Lower class N ₂ =50	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Family related	6	12	32	64
2.	School related	9	18	3	6
3.	Society related	7	14	11	22
4.	All	28	56	4	8

Table 2: Percentage distribution of the adolescent respondents on the basis of the issues of the disagreements

S. No.	Particulars Issues of disagreements	Adolescent respondent N=500			
		Middle class N ₁ =250		Lower class N ₂ =250	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Family related	37	14.80	143	57.2
2.	School related	137	54.80	28	11.2
3.	Society related	22	8.80	61	24.4
4.	All	54	21.6	18	7.2

It is evident from Table 3 that (58% and 28%) parents from middle class families agree that disagreements arise weekly and often, respectively but in case of lower class parents, majority (46% and 32%) shows that often and daily disagreements occur, respectively. There is no respondent who says that there is no disagreement. According to the middle class respondents, occurrence of disagreements is weekly or twice / thrice

but in lower class families occurrence is daily or often. Table 4 evaluates that (51.2% and 28.8%) adolescents of middle class families agree that occurrence of disagreements is weekly and often, respectively. In lower class families (48% and 38.4%), adolescents believe that frequency of disagreements is often and weekly, respectively. In middle class families, mostly frequency of disagreements is weekly or twice / thrice in a week and the same is in lower class families. When conflict occurs between adolescent and parent, emotion, hostility, and aggression may be involved because the conflict is interpersonal. Conflict with parents tends to increase in early adolescence and then decline over time. The typical young adolescents and parents quarrel twice weekly on average. Conflict that is too intense, too frequent, too long lasting, and leads to aggression and disturbances in work or relationships requires therapeutic help.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of parents on the basis of frequency of disagreements

S. No.	Particulars Frequency of disagreements	Parents respondent N=100			
		Middle class N ₁ =50		Lower class N ₂ =50	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Daily	7	14	16	32
2.	Weekly	29	58	11	22
3.	Often (twice, thrice etc.)	14	28	23	46
4.	Never	-	-	-	-

Table 4: Percentage of adolescent respondents on the basis of frequency of disagreements

S. No.	Particulars Frequency of disagreements	Parents respondent N=500			
		Middle class N ₁ =250		Lower class N ₂ =250	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Daily	45	18	34	13.6
2.	Weekly	128	51.2	96	38.4
3.	Often (twice, thrice etc.)	72	28.8	120	48
4.	Never	5	2	-	-

Table 5 indicates that in middle class families, majority of the parent respondents (76.0%) agreed that serious disagreements occur between parent and adolescent but in lower class families, occurrence of serious and normal type of disagreements is about equal. In middle class families, serious type of disagreements occur and in lower class families both type of disagreements

occur equally. Table 6 shows that majority of adolescent respondents from middle class families (69.2%) has the opinion that serious type of disagreements happen more but (30.8%) adolescents agreed that intensity of disagreements is normal in middle class families. In lower class families, (58.8%) adolescents viewed normal disagreements happen more as compared to the serious ones (41.2%). On the basis of comparative analysis of the responses of parents and adolescents both in Table 5 and Table 6 respectively, in middle class families the intensity of disagreements is serious but in lower class families, normal disagreements occur. A family has much influence on adolescents, even if their previous relations were good, now they can become strained. Serious conflicts are mentioned only in few families. But nevertheless most of them are caused by such ordinary problems as housework, day routine, dates, and marks. Parent- adolescent conflicts appear seldom when it concerns economic, social, political values (Waterman 1995). And it is very hard to find a family where there are no conflicts. Even in happy families there are conflicting relations with parents.

Table 5: Percentage distribution of respondent on the basis of intensity of disagreements

S. No.	Particulars Intensity of disagreements	Respondent N=100			
		Middle Class families N ₁ =50		Lower Class families N ₂ =50	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Serious	38	76.0	23	46.0
2.	Normal	12	24.0	27	54.0

Table 6: Percentage distribution of adolescent respondents on the basis of intensity of disagreements

S. No.	Particulars Intensity of disagreements	Adolescent Respondents N=500			
		Middle class adolescents N ₁ =250		Lower class adolescents N ₂ =250	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Serious	173	69.2	103	41.2
2.	Normal	77	30.8	147	58.8

Table 7 emphasizes that in middle class families parents, prefer scolding as well as love and affection method equally (42% and 44% respectively) for resolving the disagreements but in lower class families, mostly parents (56%) prefer scolding method to resolve the disagreements between parents and adolescents. Both types of

families do not prefer avoidance method. Table 8 analyzes that in middle class families majority of adolescents (40.4%) and (38.8%) prefer love and affection as well as avoidance method respectively for resolving the disagreements. Only (20.8%) agreed to the scolding method. But in lower class families, majority adolescents (59.6%) and (35.6%) prefer avoidance method and love and affection method respectively. Very few only (4.8%) prefer scolding method for resolving the disagreements. Updegraff et al. (2005) discussed that quality of parent-child relationship depends on parents' treatment and parents' strategies for handling conflict. Communication is an essential aspect of family functioning in order for the family to articulate its values and expectations, discuss topics, solve problems, and schedule events. Good communication is perceived as a lack of serious disagreements between adolescent and parent. Positive outcomes such as school achievement self-esteem and moral development are linked with communication that is perceived as open and that includes skill at conflict resolution.

Table 7: Percentage distribution of respondents on the basis of preference of solution to resolve the disagreement

S. No.	Particulars Solutions	Respondent N=100			
		Middle class N ₁ =50		Lower class N ₂ =50	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Scolding	21	42	28	56
2.	Avoidance	7	14	9	18
3.	Through love and affection	22	44	13	26

Table 8: Percentage distribution of adolescent respondents on the basis of preference of solution to resolve the disagreement

S. No.	Particulars Solutions	Adolescent respondents N=500			
		Middle class adolescents N ₁ =250		Lower class adolescents N ₂ =250	
		N	%	N	%
1.	Scolding	52	20.8	12	4.8
2.	Avoidance	97	38.8	149	59.6
3.	Through love and affection	101	40.4	89	35.6

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that from the point of views of parents in middle class families that all

types of disagreements happen but in lower class families parents highlighted family related as well as society related issues more. From the point of view of adolescents of middle class families, school related disagreements are highlighted but in lower class families, they ticked occurrence of family related issues of disagreements.

According to responses of parents and adolescents of both type of families, in middle class families frequency of occurrence of disagreements is weekly but in lower class families it is often. There is difference in intensity of disagreements in parent-adolescent relationships in middle and lower class families. In middle class families, the intensity of disagreements is serious but in lower class families, normal disagreements occur. Parents of middle class as well as lower class families both prefer same solution for resolving the disagreements, that is, scolding and love and affection methods. In the case of adolescents they prefer different methods from the parents but same among them means adolescents of the both type families prefer same methods, meaning avoidance as well as love and affection methods. There is great need for a stable, loving and accepting familial background for their all-round and academic success (Roychoudhary and Basu 1998).

IMPLICATIONS

1. Awareness can be created among the people regarding problems between parents and adolescents.
2. This research helps in understanding the parent-adolescent relationship in different socio-economic status.
3. People can know from where the problems are arising in their relations and they can think about the solutions easily.
4. This research can be useful for psychologists to do further researches in this area and for getting the information about the previous researches.
5. Psychotherapist can use these researches in treatment of their psycho-patients

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