

Gender Bias as Correlate of Parenting

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ABSTRACT The present study was undertaken to find gender bias in parenting patterns used by urban Punjabi parents on their children. A sample of 300 families (300 fathers and 300 mothers) were randomly selected from Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana and Patiala cities of Punjab 'Socio-Economic Status Scale' and 'Multi-Dimensional Parenting Scale' were used as quantitative measures. Significant gender differences were found in parenting patterns of urban Punjabi parents. Mothers were found to be more loving, encouraging, accepting, and progressing towards sons as compared to daughters. They were using all the negative dimensions of parenting with more intensity on daughters as compared to sons. They were more hating, rejecting, authoritarian, discouraging, and conservative towards their daughters. They also encouraged submissiveness and dependency in daughters as compared to sons. Whereas, fathers were using the similar positive dimensions on both sons and daughters. They were also using similar negative dimensions except conservatism, as they were found to be more conservative towards their daughters as compared to sons.

INTRODUCTION

Family is a basic and universal institution. The survival of society depends upon the continued existence and functioning of the family. Parenting has been defined as a single minded, unconditional desire to provide a loving, caring home. It is the parents who exert the major influence on the development of the child from birth to maturity. It is from the parents that the child initially experiences the meaning of love. Parents provide a framework within which the child may find roots, continuity and a sense of belonging. Parenthood and parenting have existed since the beginning of social life. Both mothers and fathers have remained contributors to the development of their children. Father is seen as bridge by which the child reaches the outside world (Meertoo and Burnhardt 1975). While mother symbolizes emotional support, interpersonal sensitivity and help giver etc. But favours and disfavours showed by parents based on gender difference have been a common phenomena. There are culturally approved and prescribed ways for boys and girls to think, to act, to look and to feel. Gender disparity happens to be an international problem. It starts unfolding itself in childhood. Sex-inequality seen in terms of 'marginalisation', 'invisibility' and 'exclusion' is an outcome of conscious gender-bias. Daughters in our families have a greater death-rate and are taken as a great liability. They are neglected and have improper

rearing. Sex tests, celebrating the birth of a male child and scheming for dowry are all proofs, that very few parents take trouble to settle their daughters in good careers (Chadha 1994). Parents have a strong desire for sons irrespective of their educational and economic status as they consider sons a must for propagation of race and sense of security (Kaur 2008). Keeping the above points in mind, the present study was framed to study the gender bias in parenting patterns used by urban Punjabi parents.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The data for the present study was collected from three cultural zones of Punjab state that is, Majha, Doaba and Malwa. Four cities, namely Amritsar, Ludhiana, Patiala and Hoshiarpur, were purposely selected from these three cultural zones. Urban families were again selected purposely from each city. Only those 300 families were retained which were from middle and upper middle socio-economic strata, were of Punjabi origin, where both husband and wife were alive and had at least one son and a daughter. The target sample included both husband and wife from each selected family making the total sample of 600 respondents (300 mothers and 300 fathers). Each selected subject was examined for parenting patterns separately for sons and daughters.

"Socio-economic status scale" by Bharadwaj

(2000) was used to assess the socio-economic status of respondents. "Multi-dimensional parenting scale" by Chauhan and Khokhar (1982) was used to measure parenting styles of parents. The test measures the two ends of the seven dichotomous dimensions, namely, Hate V/S Love, Discouragement V/S Encouragement, Rejection V/S Acceptance, Dependence V/S Independence, Autocratism V/S Democratism, Submission V/S Dominance and Conservatism V/S Progressivism representing negative and positive dimensions of parenting. Arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and 't' test methods were used to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents significance of difference between father-son and father-daughter dyads for positive parenting dimensions. A non-significant gender difference existed in all the seven positive dimensions of parenting stating that fathers were using almost same level of 'love', 'Encouragement', 'Acceptance', 'Democratism', 'Progressivism', 'Independency' and 'Dominance' on their sons and daughters.

Table 1: Significance of difference between father-son and father-daughter dyads for positive parenting dimensions

<i>Positive dimensions</i>	<i>Difference (1-2) between mean values for (1) father-son and (2) father-daughter dyads</i>	<i>'t' value</i>	<i>Level of significance</i>
Love	0.04	0.05	NS
Encouragement	0.26	0.41	NS
Acceptance	-0.146	0.19	NS
Democratism	-0.327	0.40	NS
Progressivism	-0.2	0.31	NS
Independency	-0.464	0.84	NS
Dominance	-0.027	0.04	NS
Total	-0.863	0.31	NS

Table 2 illustrates significance of difference between mother-son and mother-daughter dyads for positive parenting dimensions. Results revealed that significant gender differences existed in dimensions of 'love', 'Encouragement', 'Acceptance', 'Democratism' and 'Progressivism'. In all these dimensions mothers were found to be liberal towards their sons as compared to daughters. Verma and Ghadially (1986) also found that male

children receive more effective independence training and encouragement. Punia et al.(1993) stated that boys get more preference, freedom and encouragement to become more dominating as compared to girls.

Table 2: Significance of difference between mother-son and mother-daughter dyads for positive parenting dimensions

<i>Positive dimensions</i>	<i>Difference (1-2) between mean values for (1) father-son and (2) father-daughter dyads</i>	<i>'t' value</i>	<i>Level of significance</i>
Love	1.367	2.27	p<0.05
Encouragement	1.673	2.74	p<0.01
Acceptance	1.506	2.51	p<0.05
Democratism	1.106	2.29	p<0.05
Progressivism	1.127	1.39	NS
Independency	0.927	1.44	NS
Dominance	0.9	1.50	NS
Total	8.606	3.48	p<0.01

Table 3 explains significance of difference between father-son and father-daughter dyads for negative parenting dimensions. Significant gender differences were found only in dimension of 'Conservatism' showing that fathers were more conservative towards their daughters as compared to sons whereas non-significant gender differences existed in dimensions of 'Hate', 'Rejection', 'Autocratism', 'Discouragement', 'Submission' and 'Dependency'.

Table 3: Significance of difference between father-son and father-daughter dyads for negative parenting dimensions

<i>Positive dimensions</i>	<i>Difference (1-2) between mean values for (1) father-son and (2) father-daughter dyads</i>	<i>'t' value</i>	<i>Level of significance</i>
Hate	0.153	0.21	NS
Rejection	-0.16	0.29	NS
Autocratism	0.303	0.39	NS
Discouragement	-0.76	0.84	NS
Submission	-0.373	0.70	NS
Conservatism	-1.586	2.73	p<0.01
Dependency	0.32	0.37	NS
Total	-2.104	0.80	NS

Table 4 shows significance of difference between mother-son and mother-daughter dyads for negative parenting dimensions. Significant gender differences existed in dimensions of 'Hate', 'Autocratism', 'Discouragement', 'Conservatism', and 'Dependency', whereas non-significant gender differences were found in case of 'Rejection' and 'Submission'. Karkal (1991) reported that girls have fewer opportunities of recreation, healthy physical exercise and socialized into docility, blind obedience and total dependence as compared to boys.

Table 4: Significance of difference between mother-son and mother-daughter dyads for negative parenting dimensions

Positive dimensions	Difference (1-2) between mean values for (1) father-son and (2) father-daughter dyads	't' value	Level of significance
Hate	-2.306	2.81	p<0.01
Rejection	-0.66	0.90	NS
Autocratism	-2.127	3.48	p<0.01
Discouragement	-1.814	3.94	p<0.01
Submission	-0.274	0.43	NS
Conservatism	-1.647	2.61	p<0.05
Dependency	-1.253	1.99	p<0.05
Total	-10.25	3.53	p<0.01

It could be concluded from the above results that mothers were more loving, encouraging, accepting and progressive towards sons as compared to daughters. They were using all the negative dimensions of parenting with more intensity on daughters as compared to sons. They were more hating, rejecting, authoritarian, discouraging and conservative towards their daughters. They also encouraged submissive-ness and dependency in daughters as compared to sons. Sravanthi and Kumari (2007) reported that authoritarian parenting style is prominent among girls than boys. Whereas Kapoor (2007) found that mothers were using similar child rearing practices on their sons and daughters. On the other hand, fathers were using similar positive dimensions on sons and daughters. They were also using similar negative dimensions except conservatism, as they were found to be more

conservative towards their daughter as compared to sons. Sinha and Prasad (1989) reported that the male children perceived their fathers as restrictive, neglecting and rejecting whereas females perceived them as permissive, loving and protecting. With respect to mothers' behaviour, male children perceived them as restricting, neglecting and rejecting whereas females perceived them as loving in greater frequency. Bhogle (1991) studied child rearing practices and behaviour development. He reported that girls, whether kids or adolescents are believed to be treated as being inferior to males. The difference in the parental attitudes is there because parents believed that girls should not be treated same way as boys, as they have to be trained for their different adult roles as wife and mother. They hold the traditional beliefs that boys need to be cared and nurtured more than girls because they carry the family name and support the parents in old age, hence show differential behaviour.

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