

PARENTING AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOUR : FEEDBACK FROM THE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

The foremost task of parenting is adequate socialization of children. The functions of parenting greatly control how children grow up and mature. This task requires parental expectations and guidance that change with the development of the child to support positive child outcomes. Among the most powerful predictors of mental health problems among adolescents are poor family relationships. Since the early nineties, quantitative empirical studies have been performed to assess the level of parents' involvement. Knowing what motivates some children with behaviour problems in the classrooms can help educators and parents deal with the situation and move towards a positive outcome. This study uses qualitative measures for parent involvement analysis. In general, the results of the current study did not support that the authoritative parenting style would be negatively related to children's intrinsic motivation. Adolescents from disengaged homes were less interested in studies and less successful in school.

Keywords: parenting, mental health, children, adolescent, behavioural problems

INTRODUCTION

Parents are defined here broadly to encompass all those adults vested with the responsibility of raising children, whatever be their biological relationships to the children, including immediate and extended family members or kin, step-parents, guardians, foster parents and tribe and clan members (*Simpson, Rae, 2001*). There is considerable steadiness across studies about the basic correlation between parent-child relationship quality and child outcomes. Meta analysis and conceptual reviews of the literature have reached a similar view. There are indications that certain dimensions may play an especially important role in some outcomes, such as over protective parenting for anxiety or monitoring/control for misbehaviour (*O' Connor Thomas G, & Stephen B.C. Scott (2007)*). Parent-child relationship quality is related with a striking assortment of different child outcomes. Behavioural/Emotional outcomes have attracted much of the attention, but there is also strong evidence concerning multiple aspects of psychological, social, educational, intellectual and physical health. It is profitable for basic and applied research to undertake the assessment of the variety of outcomes among the children.

PARENTING

Parenting is a multifaceted activity that includes many specific behaviours that work individually and jointly to influence child outcomes. The primary role of all parents is to influence, teach and control their children. Parenting style is meant to describe ordinary variations in parenting. For most children aged 10 to 16 years, the family remains the proximal background of development inspite of the increased salience of schools, peers and communities. They want to feel accepted by their parents and to be able to share with them the problems and issues in their lives (*Richardson, A. Rhonda, 2004*). There are several parenting techniques

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that have a greater impact on a child's behaviour. The largest is parental support. In multiple studies, it has been found that the support from parents bonds the adolescents with institutions and builds their self-control (Baenes et al 2006)

CONSEQUENCES FOR CHILDREN

Adolescence is a special developmental period that is considered more difficult for both parents and adolescents due to multiple changes (Arnett, 1999). During this period, children experience biological, cognitive, social, and school changes, in addition to the relational changes between parents and adolescents (Xiong, Zha Blong & others, 2008). Parenting style has been found to predict children's well-being in the domains of social competence, academic performance, psychosocial development and problem behaviours. A major issue concerning adolescence is the influence of parents on their development. The research based on parent interviews, child reports and parent observations consistently finds:

- Children and adolescents, whose parents are authoritative, rate themselves and are rated by objective measures as more socially and instrumentally competent than those whose parents are non-authoritative.
- Children and adolescents, whose parents are uninvolved, perform most poorly in all domains (Darling, Nancy).

In general, parental response predicts social competence and psycho-social functioning, while parental demanding is associated with instrumental competence and behavioural control (i.e., academic performance and deviance). The above findings indicate: "*Children and adolescents from authoritarian families are more likely to be involved in problem behaviour and perform less well in schools.*" Adolescence problem behaviours are associated with a host of negative social outcomes. Poor social skills, academic under-achievement, lack of parental guidance have been identified as risk factors for problem behaviour (Hawkins and Weis, 1985; Steiberg, 1990). Adolescents, whose parents are involved and supportive, are at a lower risk of engaging in problem behaviour than adolescents whose parents are uninvolved and unsupportive (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg, 1990).

Odebumi's (2007) study has shown that a large percentage of problem behaviour come from homes that lacked normal parental love and care. Attention, love and warmth go a long way in assisting the child's emotional development and adjustment. Children at adolescence need parental love, care, affection and serious consideration to adjust sufficiently, in the environment in which he/she lives. Parents have foremost roles to play in the tuning process of a teenager. The behavioural problems are mostly rooted in their homes (Onyechi and Okere, 2007). Otuadah (2006) found that when the relationship between the parents and the adolescent is tepid, it creates a strong background for the progress of children. The ignored adolescent slowly becomes a hardened criminal, violent, agitated, or a cultist. Ukoha (2003), Onyewadume (2004) and Otuadah (2006) observe that parents spend little or no time at home to assist in the upbringing of the children. The children invariably fall into evil associations.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Since the early nineties, quantitative empirical studies have been conducted to assess the level of parents' involvement. The main objective of this study is to determine the relationship between parenting and adolescents' problem behaviour in schools. The hypotheses tested includes "*Of the different variables like negative parenting, peer group influence and school atmosphere, child problem behaviour is an outcome of neglect from parents and poor performance of teachers in the class rooms*" and "*Children from poor parenting families show problem behaviours in schools*". The above study uses qualitative measures for parent involvement analysis. The sample of the study consisted of 100 teachers who were drawn from three

schools (CBSE) from Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala. The teachers are teaching in higher secondary classes. Data collection was done through simple random sampling technique. The Behaviour Problem Questionnaire was developed by the researcher for data collection. Personal data of the students were collected from concerned class teachers. The items of the questionnaire were generated through review of some studies on behaviour problems and pilot study. Interviews of students on behaviour problems of children were also included.

DATA COLLECTION

Copies of the questionnaire were distributed for completion. Analyses were carried out by scoring 4,3,2,1 for “*Strongly agree*”, “*Somewhat agree*”, “*Somewhat disagree*” and “*Strongly disagree*”, respectively. The focus of most contemporary developmental researchers, however, is on how parents and peers jointly influence adolescents. In this study, we examined how parenting is related to behavioural problems among adolescents. Children in classrooms can misbehave in many ways, with common outbursts involving unnecessary noise making, fighting or using abusive languages against others. Such behaviours disturb smooth learning, which reduces the gain from classrooms. Serious signs of behaviour problems in the classroom include destructiveness, lack of understanding or accountability, and disregard for classroom rules. These signs may point to behavioural chaos that requires association of both the parent and the teacher to add to the remedial process to hold up and direct the child.

Table 1: Behavioural problems of children identified

| Sl. Response | Strongly agree | Somewhat agree | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree | Total |
|---|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------|
| No. | (Value-4) | (Value-3) | (Value-2) | (Value-1) | |
| 1. Noise making | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 83 | 7 | 10 | 0 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.73 | | | | |
| 2. Fighting/using abusive languages in Schools | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 10 | 22 | 60 | 8 | 100 |
| Mean | 2.56 | | | | |
| 3. Lateness to school | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 7 | 3 | 81 | 9 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.57 | | | | |
| 4. Lying | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 80 | 7 | 10 | 3 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.64 | | | | |
| 5. Using low-rise trouser | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 83 | 10 | 7 | 0 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.76 | | | | |
| 6. Absenteeism | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 13 | 27 | 60 | 0 | 100 |

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|--|------|----|----|---|-----|
| Mean | 2.53 | | | | |
| 7. Changing of exam marks | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 73 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.73 | | | | |
| 8. Changing of seats while teaching | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 73 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.73 | | | | |
| 9. Disobedience to teachers | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 93 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.93 | | | | |
| 10. Using cigar/pan/liquor | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 37 | 12 | 51 | 0 | 100 |
| Mean | 2.86 | | | | |
| 11. Wilful disturbance in class/school assembly | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 79 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.79 | | | | |
| 12. Sex-related issues | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 22 | 7 | 71 | 0 | 100 |
| Mean | 2.51 | | | | |

Source: Field Survey N=100

Hirschi's social bonding theory examined attachment to parents and to peers, finding inverse relationships between both measures and misbehaviour. If the weakening of the bond is seen as a releasing mechanism allowing for deviant behaviour, Hirschi (1969) indicated that those adolescents with affective ties to healthy peers as well as parents should be less likely to commit deviant acts. From **Table 1**, those issues with mean value >3 were identified as serious behavioural problems. The most frequently occurring issues are changing of seats while teaching, changing of exam marks, noise making and low waist trouser. One of the problems that school officials have with boys is that of exposure due to wearing low-rise pants. There is no way to sit down when wearing deeply dipping pants, which will not expose the derriere almost entirely. Boys sitting in class with exposed backsides are certainly a distraction for other students - especially girls. Problems can also occur when a boy bends down to pick something up off the floor or even to tie a shoe. These pants also have a tendency to slide down and must frequently be pulled up. All in all, they are not comfortable to wear. The school authorities have strictly indicated that no one will be allowed to wear pants that expose underwear. But our study reveals that a low-rise pant is one of the serious behavioural problems shown by the boys.

The finding, such as noise-making/changing seats while teaching was rated the highest, among the 12 behaviour problems. It suggests that students may either not be adequately engaged in both curricular and extra-curricular activities in school or that they lack interest in class work. Teachers should be adequately trained and motivated to meet the challenges posed by the education of students at the higher secondary level. From the above analysis, the first hypothesis: *“Of the different variables like negative parenting, peer group influence and school atmosphere, child problem behaviour is an outcome of neglect from parents and poor performance of teachers in the class rooms”* is accepted.

The behavioural problems perceived by teachers as “not frequently” occurring include sex-related issues, absenteeism, using cigar/pan/liquor, fights in schools, etc. There is a strong and well-established link between adolescent’s association with deviant peers and externalising problems such as drug use and delinquency (Galambos, L., Nancy & others, 2003). The mean value for bad peer influence as rated by the teachers in **Table 2** strongly agrees with the above. Without a strong attachment with parents, an adolescent will begin to associate in deviant peers. Such peers pressure the adolescents to begin or continue involving in deviant activities.

The perceived causes of behaviour problems among children were also identified from the teachers. Most of the issues highlighted include broken home, bad peer influence; neglect by parents, over-caring and neglects of bad behaviour of their children (**Table 2**). The mean responses of the teachers ranged from 2.21 to 3.93. The ranking of the perceived causes of behaviour problems revealed that broken home, neglect by parents and bad peer influence are among the most common perceived causes of behavioural problems.

Table 2: Problems identified by the teachers

| Sl. Response No. | Strongly agree (Value-4) | Somewhat agree (Value-3) | Somewhat disagree (Value-2) | Strongly disagree (Value-1) | Total |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| 1. Broken home | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 83 | 12 | 5 | 0 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.78 | | | | |
| 2. Bad Peer influence | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 80 | 7 | 10 | 3 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.64 | | | | |
| 3. Neglect by parents | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 93 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.93 | | | | |
| 4. Neglecting the issues created by children | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 74 | 12 | 4 | 10 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.5 | | | | |
| 5. Non-cooperative attitude of parents | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 60 | 23 | 7 | 10 | 100 |
| Mean | 3.73 | | | | |
| 6. Poor school environment | | | | | |
| Frequencies | 23 | 7 | 38 | 32 | 100 |
| Mean | 2.21 | | | | |

Source: Field Survey N=100

From the above analysis, we find that teachers and parents play complementary roles. Parents should be regularly reminded of their role in the development of their children. Parental monitoring has proven one of the strongest deterrents to adolescent association in almost any problem behaviour. The quality of parenting and family relationships was strongly associated with children’s behaviour. Indifferent parenting reduces the

availability of parental values to adolescents because it provides no clear standards and expectations from which to infer parental values (Knefo, Ariel, & Shalom, H. Schwartz, 2003). Hence we could say that indifferent parenting underlines accurate perception. From the above analysis in **Table 2**, the second hypothesis which states that “*Children from poor parenting families show problem behaviours in schools*” appears true. To prevent problem behaviour from appearing, parents must use effective discipline, monitoring and problem solving techniques. Parents, who do not support positive behaviour and punish problem behaviour, are more likely to experience weak bonds with their children.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study highlight significant relationships between parenting styles and children’s behavioural problems. The present study supports the findings of various researchers which have shown the relationship between parenting and children’s behavioural problems. Parents affect their adolescent’s problem behaviours. Two factors have been identified that have the ability to aid in decreasing the problem behaviour rates. These include family/parents at one end of the spectrum and the school on the other, with an overall factor of parenting. When there is no proper monitoring and adequate support from family, adolescents are more likely to fall into behavioural problem. It can be deduced from the study that we need to re-examine behavioural problems of children and develop proper approaches for their management. The parents should encourage and support the schools in maintaining the requisite discipline for effective learning. Much is required to be done at home as well as the school if we want adolescents to be sufficient in being self-controlled and properly accustomed in the social milieu.

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