

Child Rearing Practices and its Impact on the Emotional Wellbeing of Adolescents

Switymala Deka

NEF College, Guwahati, Assam

Parenting has significant influence on how children are raised. The childrearing practices contribute to a child's overall well-being and developing stable personality traits. Active involvement and unconditional positive regard of the parents' in the formative years is vital for a child's emotional development. Adolescents go through turmoil and turbulences in the process of adjusting to the physical changes, societal expectations and establishing an identity. Appropriate counsel, positive parenting approaches, nurture and guidance at the right time can help them cope with challenges and master the skills necessary to deal with the emotional changes. A purposive sampling technique was used to obtain data from 540 teenagers enrolled in private institutes of Guwahati. The study examined the impact of parental behavior on their emotional wellness. Use of statistics to interpret the data showed substantial correlation between certain dimensions of parental behavior with adolescents' emotional maturity. Irrespective of the gender, the sample also exhibited levels of emotional immaturity.

Keywords: Parenting practices, emotional maturity, adolescence

Parenting is a universal phenomenon that transcends cultures. According to the American Psychological Association, parenting practices around the world focuses on three primary goals: ensuring children's health and safety, preparing children for adulthood, and passing down cultural values (APA, 2018). According to Maccoby & Martin (1983), the complexities of studying the impact of parenting practices can be addressed by categorizing the parenting styles into four types: Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive and Uninvolved. Parental attitudes and behavior can range from open acceptance to hostile rejection, from excessive indulgence to carelessness, from complete autonomy to authoritarian control, from dominance to submission, from love to rejection, and from anxious emotional involvement to overt attention (Ojha, 2009). These styles are based on two important parenting dimensions: parental warmth which is reflected in the display of affection towards the child and parental control which is

reflected in the roles played by parents in promoting respect for social conventions and rules (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). According to Baumrind (1991), authoritarian styles deals with exerting low levels of comfort and warmth while higher levels of control and disciplinary measures, frequent punishments, no scope for flexibility and usually a one way communication from the parent to the child. Children raised by authoritarian parents display hostility, rebelliousness, delinquency as well as antisocial aggression (Baumrind, 1991). While a child raised in an authoritative parenting environment appears to be emotionally competent to deal with life's challenges, they are more likely to be committed to their studies, participate in school activities, and actively participate in decision making, experience less depression, are confident and have higher self-esteem as well as interact well with peers. Hamidreza & Maryam (2011) stated that "acceptance-involvement" and "psychological autonomy-

granting” styles were the significant positive predictors of the self-esteem. Diana Baumrind, a developmental psychologist, defines negligent parenting as a parent’s lack of involvement in the child’s life. A negligent (uninvolved or indifferent) parenting approach is characterized by indifferent and rejecting behavior patterns, which have a negative impact on the child’s well-being, emotional stability, and ability to develop a stable personality as an adult in later life. Studies by Abidin et al., (2022) suggests parental support enhances the well-being of adolescents by satisfying their basic psychological needs while, rejecting and thwarting behaviors do not necessarily deal with the satisfaction of a child’s needs. A child’s perception about parents being controlling and emotionally neglectful are connected with developing psychiatric disorder later and should seriously considered as a risk factor for future psychopathology (Young et al., 2011). Similarly, “indulgent (or permissive) parenting” refers to a parenting style in which parents spend a lot of time with their children but do not impose many restrictions or demands. Studies suggests that indulgent parenting styles contributes internalizing difficulties and psychological well-being problems like distress, anxiety and withdrawal among children across different developmental stages like childhood (Bayer et al., 2006) as well as young adulthood (Chui et al., 2019). Permissive parents appear to have inconsistent guidelines for their children and allow them to do anything they want. Excessive involvement with little or no control reflect indulgent parenting, which could have a significant negative impact on the psychological well-being of the adolescents in a various aspect of their lives (Bahr et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2000; Gar & Hudson, 2008; Coccia et al., 2012 & Darling et al., 2015). Children raised by permissive parents usually exhibit noncompliant, domineering, and egocentric behavior

patterns, which contribute to the most obvious indicators of emotional immaturity. According to Clarke et al., (2014) overindulgence might contribute to negative feelings, such as anger, embarrassment and guilt.

Adolescence is a critical transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, marked by rapid physical and mental development. A variety of mental health concerns, including severe emotional, psychological, and psychosocial crises, are usually triggered by developmental changes in the new direction (Baumrind, 1991). Research has found significant correlation between parenting and child behavioral adjustment. Parental styles significantly contribute to teenage mental health (Siyi, 2023). In another study by Okorn et al., (2022) positive discipline, parental support, and structure were uniquely associated with child externalizing and internalizing behaviors across toddler and preschool ages. Azman et al., (2021) reflects on the correlation between parenting styles and mental health of children and adolescents. In the present study, an attempt is made to investigate several patterns in the dimension of parenting, which includes “Very Highly Permissive,” “Highly Permissive,” “Moderately Permissive,” “Moderately Restrictive,” “Highly Restrictive,” and “Very Highly Restrictive” (Ojha, 2009). A parent is a child’s first social contact and promotes their physical, emotional, cognitive, social and spiritual development from the time of birth until adulthood. Studies by Baig et al., (2021) suggests that adolescents with positive parental participation had better diet, health, and hygiene, as well as significantly fewer cases of bullying, poor mental health, less physical injury, and lower tobacco and other substance use. According to Baumrind (1991), teenagers who receive love, care and warmth from parents feel emotionally competent and easily navigate through the developmental obstacles at this critical point of their lives; while those devoid of love and

attention exhibit erratic emotional patterns of conduct. During early adolescence, the mechanisms involved in personality formation undergo a series of transitions until they fully adjust and establish stable patterns (Eccles et al., 1989). Emotional competence in the early formative years paves the foundation for children to establish solid personality traits. Children raised by authoritative parents have better mental health compared to children raised in an authoritarian and permissive environment (Williams et al., 2012).

Objectives of the study

1. To explore the behavior of parents towards adolescent girls and boys.
2. To identify the level of emotional maturity of the adolescents.
3. To study the gender difference in the various areas of emotional wellbeing as measured by the emotional maturity scale.
4. To study the correlation between behavior of parents and levels of emotional wellbeing of the adolescents.

Hypotheses of the study

- H₁ There is a significant difference in the behavior of parents towards girls and boys.
- H₂ There is a significant difference in the emotional wellbeing of the adolescents.
- H₃ There is a significant difference in the various areas of emotional wellbeing of the adolescents.
- H₄ There is a significant correlation between the behavior of parents and levels of emotional well-being of the adolescents.

Method

Sample

A purposive sampling technique is used to collect data from 540 adolescents (15-19 years) studying in private institutes of Guwahati.

Tools

Three Dimensional Parental Behavior Inventory (TDPI) by Hardeo Ojha- The scale has 48 items and a father form as well as a mother form with three dimensions- Restrictive-Permissive (RP), Neglecting-Protecting (NP) and Rejecting-Loving (RL). Every dimension has positive and negative items. In the Restrictive-Permissive dimension, permissive treatment by the parents constitutes the positive items and the restrictive behavior constituting the negative items. In the Neglecting- Protecting dimension, positive items indicate anxious emotional involvement or indulgent behavior of the parents and negative items indicating carefree behavior or neglecting the child. Likewise, in the Rejecting-Loving dimension, positive items indicate parental love and negative items indicate rejecting or hostile behavior of the parents.

Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS) by Dr. Yashvir Singh and Dr. Mahesh Bhargava – The scale has 48 items divided into five categories- Emotional Stability (10 items), Emotional Progression (10 items), Social Adjustment (10 items), Personality Integration (10 items) and Independence (8 items). It is a self reporting five point scale.

Procedure

Prior permission was obtained from the respective institute authorities before administering the questionnaires to the students. The rationale of the study was clearly explained and students were informed that they can withdraw anytime it was uncomfortable to participate. The obtained

data was interpreted based on the test norms and statistical measures. This is ex-post facto research which aims to explore the relationship between dimensions of parental behavior and emotional health of the school going teenagers. The students were required to think of the behavior of their parents towards them until they were 12 years of age and respond accordingly in the father form and mother form of the three-dimensional parental behavior inventory. After a reasonable gap of 15 minutes, the students were administered the emotional maturity scale.

Inclusion criteria

- ♣ Adolescents studying in private schools/colleges in Guwahati.
- ♣ Students who have attained puberty and fall within the age group of 15-19 years.
- ♣ Physically and cognitively fit sample.
- ♣ Teenagers staying with parents.
- ♣ Students studying in the 8th -12th standard.
- ♣ Both girls and boys residing in urban areas.

Results and Discussion

Objective 1. i: To explore parenting style of father towards adolescent girls and boys.

Table 1. Behavioral pattern of father towards girls and boys

	Area I Restrictive - Permissive (RP)		Area II (NP) Neglecting-Protecting		Area III (RL) Rejecting-Loving	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
FATHER						
Number	270	270	270	270	270	270
Mean	46.41	45.44	62.23	63.35	60.63	63.18
Interpretation	Moderately restrictive	Moderately restrictive	Highly protective	Highly protective	Highly loving	Highly loving
t	1.440		-1.666		-3.902(*)	

The findings displayed in table 1(i) represent no significant difference in the behavior of father in the "Restrictive-Permissive (RP) dimension. Fathers exhibited a "moderately restrictive" behavioral pattern and did not display a highly permissive style irrespective of the gender of the children. This supports a study by Singh et al., (2021) which stated that permissive parenting contributes to poor psychological and emotional health. On the basis of the responses given by the adolescents, it was found that the fathers not only allowed their children to go out with friends but also didn't restrict any of their friends from coming home either, and this contributed to developing

self-esteem and confidence in them. A study by Gecas & Schwalbe (1986) reports that self-esteem of boys were affected by the control/autonomy aspect of parental behavior while that of girls' was more strongly affected by parental support and participation. In most cases children were even allowed to do things their way with minimum restriction. Research indicates that parental authority and discipline changes through adolescence (Noller, 1994); i.e., the need to control, the practice of exercising of power during childhood should be substituted with reasoning (Baumrind, 1996). Despite this, regrettably, most parents not only observe their child's behavior but make a judgment

of it based on their parenting techniques, which can have major implications on the process of socialization of children, especially in circumstances when rejection is used as a form of discipline. (Baumrind 1996, Rohner 2004).

In the “Neglecting-Protecting (NP)” dimension, no significant difference was observed in the behavior of father and they exhibited a “highly protective” pattern irrespective of the gender of the child. According to the students, the fathers frequently asked their friends to look after each other when the children were out with them and urged that they seek aid and advice from others in any work they undertake. The fathers were always prepared to offer and extend assistance whenever the children required it and it relates to developing stable personalities later. This is also supported by another study where positive impact of parental involvement on youth’s academic achievement was reported (Altschul, 2011).

In the “Rejecting-Loving (RL)”, the respective mean scores showed a “highly loving” behavioral pattern of father for both girls and boys. However the ‘t’ value indicates a slightly more loving approach of the fathers towards the girls compared to the boys. Highly loving and supportive behavior not only contributes to positive emotional health but also facilitates in forming mature and stable relationships which is a requirement for the adolescents as they prefer associating with friends and peers instead of parents. According to the Interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory) it is parental acceptance and rejection that forms the warmth dimension of parenting which is four important expressions of parental caring or lack of caring: (I) warmth or affection as an expression of acceptance, and coldness or lack of affection as an expression of rejection, (II) hostility or aggression, (III) indifference or neglect, and (IV) undifferentiated rejection (Rohner, 2020).

Objective 1.ii: To explore parenting style of mother towards adolescent girls and boys.

Table 1(ii). Behavioral pattern of mothers towards girls and boys

MOTHER Form	Area I Restrictive - Permissive (RP)		Area II (NP) Neglecting-Protecting		Area III (RL) Rejecting-Loving	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Number	270	270	270	270	270	270
Mean	46.40	45.68	60.94	62.37	59.10	62.25
Interpretation	Moderately restrictive	Moderately restrictive	Highly protective	Highly protective	Highly loving	Highly loving
‘t’	1.227		-1.953		-4.636(*)	

The respective mean scores and a ‘t’ value of 1.227 in table 1(ii) represents no significant difference in the behavior of mothers in the ‘Restrictive- Permissive (RP)’ dimension for both girls and boys. A “moderately restrictive” behavioral attitude towards the children irrespective of the gender was observed in the study. Though

the findings in this study reports of individual differences in the pattern of their responses, the overall behavioral pattern of the mothers were found to be moderately controlling and permissive thus with a higher chance of contributing to the child’s level of positive emotional health with a sense of effective regulation of the emotions, well developed

self-esteem, self control as well as enhanced social skills. According to Moreira & Canavarro (2020), mindful parenting is instrumental in fostering adaptive emotion regulation in adolescents by facilitating self-compassion and psychological flexibility.

The “Neglecting-Protecting (NP)” indicates no significant difference in the behavior of mothers and a “highly protecting” behavioral approach was seen irrespective of the gender. The adolescents’ responses supported the finding, as evidenced by statements such as ‘never allowed to take up any work that would contribute to failure’; ‘would send someone out whenever they were late’; ‘would catch the hand while crossing the road or passing through a crowded street’; ‘not allowed to go out alone’, and so on. The “neglect” or the “protect” dimension of a parent has long-term consequences on adolescents’ personality development, other psychological features, and mental health. For example behavior of a mother, specifically the extent of displaying affection and exerting behavioral control until the child is five years old has a significant impact on the child’s internalizing and externalizing behaviors in the later stages of life (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005). As Colman and Widom (2004) point out, a physically abused or maltreated child has trouble forming close

and healthy connections as an adult (Santrock, 2008).

The “Rejecting- Loving (RL)” dimension depicts a “highly loving behavior” of the mother towards the teenagers though the significant ‘t’ value indicates a slightly more inclination towards the boys. The results revealed that regardless of the gender of the child, the mothers had no bias and frequently spoke positively about their children, showed a strong interest in the child, paid special attention to their positive characteristics, and actively participated in teaching the children excellent manners and values. According to a number of studies, children’s and teenagers’ psychological and social adjustment varies depending on their connections with their parents, whether they are accepted or rejected (Rohner, 2004). Studies by Peng et al., (2021) suggests that emotional warmth of parents had a positive influence on the mental health of adolescents; while parental rejection and overprotection have a deleterious impact on teenage mental health, notably reducing self-esteem and increasing psychological rigidity. While, when children are raised by uninvolved parents signs of depression as well as behavioral problems are inevitable (Downey & Coyne, 1990).

Objective 2: To study the gender difference in the level of emotional wellbeing of adolescents

Table 2. Level of emotional wellbeing of adolescents

Emotional Maturity Scale	Gender	Mean	Interpretation	t'	Remarks
	Girls	103.94	Emotionally immature	0.351	N.S
	Boys	103.32	Emotionally immature		

Table 2 shows no significant gender difference in the emotional maturity of adolescents which supports a study by Subbarayan and Visvanathan (2011) where college students exhibited extremely unstable levels of emotional maturity. It is found that irrespective of gender, the adolescents are

emotionally immature and are prone to emotional outburst which can rise from varied situations and events. They reported unstable relationships with peers and classmates which also supports a study conducted by Christ et al., (2017) where isolation from peers were found to

significantly contribute to more depression among adolescents compared to the emotional neglect of the primary caregivers. The responses recorded by the participants also demonstrate that they are unable to effectively inhibit negative emotions such as anger and aggression, as well as irrational

fear, intolerance for disagreeable circumstances, and a lack of effective control over their thoughts and actions. In a study by Deng (2016) it was found that men often have intense emotional experiences while women on the other hand exhibit heightened arousal and appeared to be more emotionally expressive.

Objective 3: To study the gender difference in various areas of emotional wellbeing.

Table 3: Gender difference in various areas of emotional wellbeing

Areas of Emotional Maturity Scale	Gender	No of Participants	Mean	t	Remarks
Emotional Stability	Girls	270	23.89	-1.512	N.S
	Boys	270	24.76		
Emotional Progression	Girls	270	22.47	.613	N.S
	Boys	270	22.17		
Social Adjustment	Girls	270	20.19	3.748	Significant
	Boys	270	18.37		
Personality Integration	Girls	270	20.07	-.034	N.S
	Boys	270	20.09		
Independence	Girls	270	17.86	-.209	N.S
	Boys	270	17.94		

Table 3 reveals that there is no substantial gender difference in emotional stability, and girls and boys have similar degrees of emotional growth. However, social adjustment ratings differed between girls and boys, with girls appearing to be more socially adjusted than the boys supported by similar findings by Choudhary (2014). Social adjustment deals with the process of effective communication, developing meaningful relationships and develops an effective social support network. The findings of this study indicated no difference in the level of personality integration as well as independence in case of both girls and boys. Personality integration is the process of

unifying diverse elements of an individual's motives and dynamic tendencies resulting in harmonious coactions and de-escalation of the inner conflict in the undaunted expression of behavior (Singh & Bhargava, 2012). Independence refers to the attitude and capacity of a person to be self-reliant and resistant to control by others and uses his intellect and creative potentialities to make use of judgments and to take effective decisions.

Objective

To study the correlation between the dimensions of parental behavior and various areas of emotional wellbeing.

Table 4. Correlation between the dimensions of parental behavior and various areas of emotional wellbeing

	Area I_F	Area I_M	Area II_F	Area II_M	Area III_F	Area III_M
Emotional Stability	.006	-.019	-.022	-.034	.074	.067
Emotional Progression	-.070	-.059	-.057	-.068	.067	.052
Social Adjustment	.023	.011	-.117(**)	-.145(**)	-.123(**)	-.095(*)
Personality Integration	-.092(*)	-.117(**)	-.145(**)	-.142(**)	-.014	-.011
Independence	-.042	-.040	-.092(*)	-.072	.049	.052
Emotional Maturity	-.042	-.049	-.094(*)	-.101(*)	.032	.027

Table 4 depicts that Area I (Restrictive-permissive styles of father and mother), Area II (Neglecting-Protecting styles of father as well as mother) has a significant positive correlation with Personality Integration. Findings of a study conducted by Zheng (2023), demonstrated that authoritative parenting style resulted in creating desirable and healthy personality traits and less behavioral difficulties; however, authoritarian and permissive approaches not only contribute to the development of maladaptive personalities but also externalizing and internalizing disorders. Chorpita & Barlow (1998) proposes that parental control during the child's early formative years of life contributes to developing anxiety.

Area II (Neglecting-Protecting dimensions in case of both father and mother) and Area III (Rejecting-Loving dimension of father as well as mother) shows a significant correlation with social adjustment of the adolescents. Singh et al., (2013) in their study found significant positive correlation between social and emotional maturity of adolescents. Parents who endeavor to understand their children's needs frequently behave in warm and caring ways in order to provide them with appropriate advice and direction. As a result, children feel appreciated and begin to believe that the

world is a safe place to socialize and display competence, exceptional maturity, assertiveness and higher levels of self-control (Baumrind, 1991). Child-centered disciplinary practices, verbal reasoning and explanations contribute to raising children who appear to display higher levels of prosocial behavior, moral reasoning and moral conscience (Krevans & Gibbs, 1996). Rejection, on the other side, can contribute to social isolation in youngsters who are afraid of initiating discussions and developing good social relationships as adults. According to Rapee (1997), low warmth as often displayed by authoritarian parenting is found to have links with depression.

Limitations and further suggestions

Focusing only on adolescents is a major disadvantage in this research. A comparative study across different stages of life can provide with new information on parenting and its impact on emotional wellbeing of teenagers. The survey does not include students who attend government schools or live in remote areas. Comparative studies conducted in schools/colleges in various regions might shed light on how different cultures raise their children. To gain a deeper understanding of the correlation between

teenage emotional stability and parental behavior, a longitudinal study is necessary. It is not possible to generalize the results of this study as it is based on a relatively small sample. There was no way to record the responses of parents' in this study. Family relationships and a better grasp of temperaments can provide a wealth of information. Adolescents raised by foster parents, students living in hostels, orphanages, and childcare homes are not included in the study, which could provide valuable information on the adolescents' mental well-being. Demographic variables such as teenagers' birth order and number of siblings can be used to determine the impact of parental behavior on their level of involvement and cooperation. Variables such as education, socioeconomic level, family environment, and parental temperament can be examined to better understand the significance of their behavior toward their children.

Conclusion

Development continues throughout one's life and is influenced by their upbringing. In this study, parents displayed a "moderately restrictive," "highly protective," and "highly loving" behavioral disposition toward their children, regardless of gender, which can be useful in demonstrating stability in later stages of life. Moderately restricted conduct, fine balance of control, avoiding being invasive and critical of their children are the predominant traits of the parents with the moderately restrictive attitude. These children have the freedom to express themselves; therefore the possibility of reliance in later life is remote. Meanwhile, children of 'very protective' parents can exhibit severe dependency, dread of making decisions even as adults, lack of autonomy, and the possibility of developing unstable romantic and interpersonal relationships later in life. Children with 'very loving' parents may exhibit stubborn behavior, refusing to accept

"no" for an answer. Lack of control and loose or contradictory discipline can even contribute to externalizing problem behaviors like aggression and dysfunctional conducts aimed at others as well as internalizing problem behaviors with reference to negative moods like anxiety, guilt and depression when their needs are thwarted.

The findings of this study indicated emotional immaturity in adolescents, regardless of gender, which can be attributed to a variety of factors such as the stage of transition to adulthood, the need to establish their identity at school, the difficulty of deciding on a career in the upcoming college days, their state of mind while taking the test, the consequences of their teenage love affairs, and specific environmental conditions. These elements are a record of the adolescents' verbatim responses. However, a rigorous technique is necessary to validate conclusions based on these replies.

This study showed no positive correlation of emotional stability, emotional progression, independence and emotional maturity with the restrictive-permissive, the neglecting-protecting & 'rejecting-loving' dimensions of parenting. Social adjustment was not dependent on the 'restrictive-permissive' parenting styles; Independence of the adolescents were not determined by the parental styles irrespective of the dimension specially in case of the mother while fathers with their 'neglecting-protecting' style exerted an influence on the level of independence of their child.

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Switymala Deka, PhD., Assistant Professor, HOD, Department of Psychology, NEF College, Lokhara-781040, Guwahati, Assam; Email: deka.swity04@gmail.com