

The Mediating Role of Social Competence in the Relationship between Perceived Parenting and Adolescent Self-Image

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This study examines the mediating role of social competence in the association between perceived parenting styles and self image among adolescents. The significance of the study was found in a psycho social context where more effective intervening mediation variables are sought to strengthen the bond between perceived parenting and self image. The participants consisted of 593 adolescent girls and boys, aged 13-18, attending high school and higher secondary levels. Utilizing a multi-stage sampling method, a descriptive correlational research design was employed. Results revealed a significant relationship between various modes of perceived parenting and self image of adolescents. Moreover, social competence emerges as a mediator in the relationship between parenting factors and self image, highlighting the importance of social skills in mitigating impulsive behaviors among adolescents. These findings underscore the intricate interplay between parenting styles, social competence, and self image in adolescent development.

Key words: Social Competence, Perceived Parenting, Self image

Adolescence is a transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood. The World Health Organization defines an adolescent as anyone between the ages of 10 and 19. However, it is also widely acknowledged as an age of storms and stress due to the incomparable stress and conflicts one experiences during the phase of identity formation and personality development. (Hurlock, 1980).

Adolescent self-image is a complex interplay of internal perceptions and external influences that shape how young individuals see themselves. It encompasses their beliefs, feelings, and evaluations about their own identity, appearance, abilities, and worth. Positive self-image fosters confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging, while negative self-image can lead to insecurity, anxiety, and self-doubt. Understanding and nurturing healthy self-image is crucial for

promoting adolescents' emotional well-being and personal growth.

During this developmental stage, adolescents often grapple with issues of self-esteem, body image, and social comparison as they navigate the transition from childhood to adulthood. Factors such as perceived parenting, peer acceptance, media portrayals, family dynamics, and cultural norms significantly impact how adolescents perceive themselves. Among these, perceived parenting has a greater importance in promoting positive self image.

Research in the field of parenting underscores its profound impact on adolescent well-being and development. Francis, Pai, and Badagabettu (2021) explore the correlation between perceived parenting styles and adolescent psychological well-being, revealing that authoritative parenting

fosters positive outcomes by providing consistent support.

The study by Wu et al.,(2023) revealed that ineffective parenting practices were connected to lower self-efficacy and lower self image and perceived parental rejection among adolescents, which subsequently led to poorer mental health outcomes. These findings underscore the crucial role of parenting approaches in shaping adolescents' mental well-being, emphasizing the importance for parents to carefully consider their parenting practices for the benefit of their children's mental health.

Perceived parenting encompasses both perceived mothering and perceived fathering, each exerting a substantial impact on the personality development of adolescents. Cruz et al. (2020) emphasized the notable effect of maternal support on adolescent social skills, while Dou et al. (2020) discovered a predominantly positive perception of maternal parenting among adolescents, particularly girls. Ang, R. P. (2006) demonstrated the influence of mothers' parenting style on school attitudes among Asian adolescents, highlighting the nuanced role of parental perceptions that often lean towards maternal influence.

Social competence is defined as proficiency in interpersonal interactions, emerging from the exercise of social and emotional skills, leading to acceptance and social inclusion. (Rose & Denham2009). The development of social skills not only enhances interpersonal relationships but also positively influences self-esteem and impulsivity in adolescents. Strong social competence fosters a positive self-perception, empowering adolescents to navigate social challenges with confidence and reducing impulsivity through effective coping mechanisms. Nurturing parenting practices that prioritize social competence lay the groundwork for healthy social

development, promoting positive self-image and improved impulse control. Rose Krasnor, L. (1997) defines social competence as proficiency in social interactions, incorporating personal and external perspectives and emphasizing its dynamic nature shaped by interactions and contexts.

In today's evolving world, the self-image of adolescents holds significant importance as it profoundly influences various facets of their lives, encompassing academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. Adolescents with a negative self-image may contend with low self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and challenges in building meaningful relationships. This self-perception can intricately impact their mental health, often worsening the conditions like anxiety, depression, and other psychological concerns. Research has underscored the pivotal role of adolescents' perceptions of their upbringing in shaping their self-image and self-esteem. Given this backdrop, there is an urgent need for effective interventions aimed at enhancing self-esteem. Therefore, the current study endeavors to investigate the mediating influence of social competence on fortifying adolescent self-image."

Objectives of the study

1. To investigate the relationship between perceived modes of fathering and mothering among adolescents and self-image.
2. To examine how social competence mediates the relationship between various modes of perceived parenting and self-image.

Hypotheses of Study

- H1: There is a significant relation between each mode of perceived mothering (PM) and the self image of adolescents.
- H2: There is a significant relation between each mode of perceived fathering and the self image of adolescents.

H3 : There is a significant mediating role of social competence in the relationship between parenting factors and self image.

Method

Research Design

A correlational research design was employed to investigate the intricate links between perceived parenting styles and various psychological outcomes in adolescents. This descriptive cross-sectional study examined the connections between perceived fathering and mothering styles and self-image. Regression analysis was used to assess how social competence mediates the relationship between perceived parenting and self-image, as well as to determine correlation coefficients.

Participants of the study

The population of the study consists of adolescent students who pursue high school and higher secondary school education in Kerala.

Sample Size

A total of 593 adolescent students participated in the study, comprising 207 boys and 386 girls.

Inclusion Criteria

- Both male and female adolescent students who belong to the age group of 13 to 18 are included in the study.
- Adolescent students who pursue high school and higher secondary school education in Kerala, in government, aided and private schools.
- Participants under the age of 18 must have parental or guardian consent to participate in the study.
- Adolescents who live with their parents or those whose parents are away on work.

- Adolescent students who have the ability to understand and respond to the assessment tools.

Exclusion criteria

- Adolescent students who are considered vulnerable due to their circumstances (e.g., orphans, individuals with severe medical conditions, individuals with disabilities) are excluded from the study to ensure ethical considerations and avoid potential harm.
- Adolescents who are orphans and reared up in institutions like orphanages and boarding schools
- Adolescents who have psychological vulnerabilities and character disorders and personality disorders
- Adolescents whose father or mother died during early childhood itself

Sampling Method: Multi-stage Sampling

Multi-stage sampling is used in this research as the population of the study is large and geographically dispersed. The sampling method involves dividing the population into smaller, more manageable subgroups or clusters and then selecting samples from each of these clusters.

Stage 1: Selection of Clusters: In the first stage, clusters of high schools and higher secondary schools were identified. Purposive sampling was used in this stage. The rationale of the selection of samples from the wider population was that the regional division of Kerala and the rural-urban nature of the districts. Kerala is a wide region, geographically divided into South, Central and North. So, schools are selected from each region, which consists of rural and urban districts . The districts of Kollam, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Kozhikode, and Wayanad in Kerala were selected.

Stage 2: Sampling within Clusters: After identifying clusters, by using availability sampling high schools and higher secondary schools are selected from each cluster. This ensured representation from State, CBSE and ICSE schools.

Stage 3: Selection of Participants within Schools: Within each selected school, a random sample of students meeting the inclusion criteria were chosen using simple random sampling. The procedure adopted in this phase is the following: A list of students enrolled in each selected school was obtained. Then a unique number was assigned to each student on the list. The researcher used a random number generator or lottery method to select a predetermined sample size of students.

Measures

1. Perceived Parenting Scale, (Bharadwaj, Sharma, and Garg, 1998)
2. Social Competence Scale (Dr. Latika Sharma and Punita Rani, 2013)
3. Index of Self Image Scale (Dr. Jacob George and Dr. H. Sam Sananda Raj (2013).

Results

H1: There is a significant relation between each mode of perceived mothering (PM) and the self image of adolescents.

Table 1 Relationship of each mode of perceived mothering and self image among adolescents

Variable	N	Self image	P value
PM (A)	591	.35*	< .01
PM(B)	591	.21*	< .01
PM(C)	591	.22*	< .01
PM (D)	591	.06	>.05
PM (E)	591	.35*	< .01
PM(F)	591	.25*	< .01
PM(G)	591	.31*	< .01

* p<.05, ** p < .01 PM= Perceived Mothering

Thus, the hypothesis “There is a significant relation between each mode of perceived mothering and the self image of adolescents” is accepted.

H2: There is a significant relation between each mode of perceived fathering and the self image of adolescents.

Table 2 Relationship of each mode of perceived fathering and self image of adolescents

Variable	N	Self image	P value
PF (A)	591	.33*	< .01
PF (B)	591	.22*	< .01
PF (C)	591	.23*	< .01
PF (D)	591	.07	>.05
PF (E)	591	.35*	< .01
PF (F)	591	.24*	< .01
PF (G)	591	.29*	< .01
PF (H)	591	.38	< .01

* p<.05, ** p < .01 PF=Perceived Fathering

Thus, the hypothesis “There is a significant relation between each mode of perceived fathering and the self image of adolescents” is accepted.

Table 3 Predicting Self Image from Parenting Factors

Predictors	β	t	Sig.
PM_A	.132	1.848	.065
PM_B	.028	.428	.669
PM_C	-.116	-1.625	.105
PM_E	.087	1.278	.202
PM_F	-.010	-.152	.880
PM_G	.075	1.035	.301
PF_A	.032	.451	.652
PF_B	-.028	-.414	.679

PF_C	-.061	-.852	.394
PF_E	.165	2.508	.012
PF_F	-.074	-1.049	.294
PF_G	.034	.526	.599
P_H	.255	5.383	.000

R² = .193, F (13, 579) = 11.925, p < .001

Table 3 presents the results of predicting self image from various parenting factors. The regression analysis reveals several significant relationships between certain parenting factors and self image of adolescents.

H3 : There is a significant mediating role of social competence in the relationship between parenting factors and self image

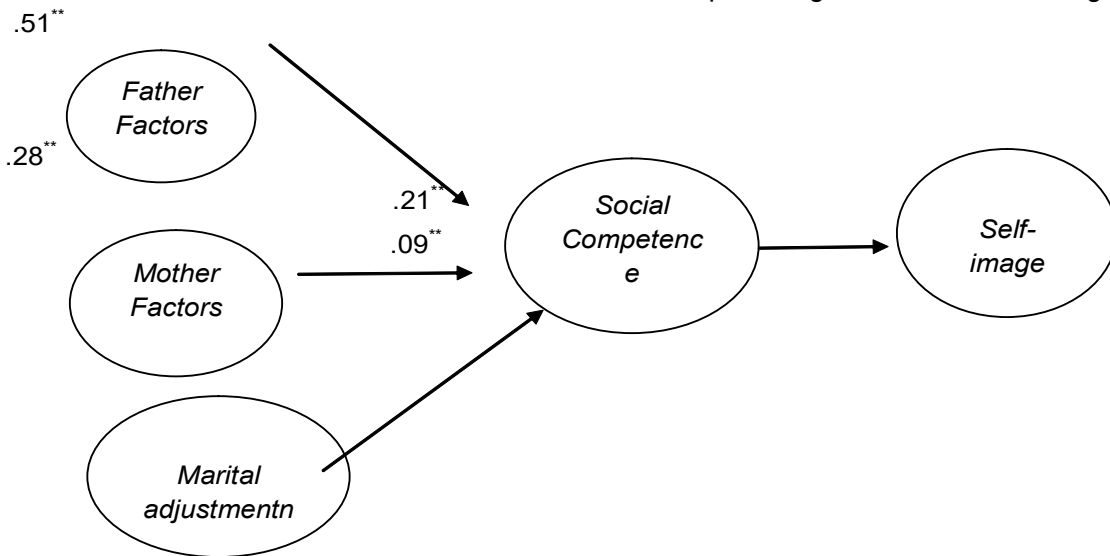


Figure 1. Mediating Role of Social Competence on the Relationship Between Parenting Factors and Self-image

To analyse the mediating role of social competence on the relationship of parenting factors with self-image, total scores of father factors, mother factors and social competence are calculated. Path diagram and regression coefficients of mediation model is presented in the Figure 1

Table 4. Indirect Effect of Parenting Factors on Self-Image Through Social Competence

Predictors	β	95 % CI	
		LB	UB
Father Factors	.11**	.058	.168
Mother Factors	.06**	.021	.101
Marital Adjustment	.018*	.003	.036

** p < .01, * p < .05

Discussion

Results of correlation analysis presented in the table 1 indicates that scores of self-images are positively related to the dimensions (A)acceptance, (B) protection,(C)indulgence, (E)moralism,(F) discipline,(G) realistic role expectation and (H)marital adjustment. $p(591) = .35, .21, .22, .35, .25, .31, p < .01$. All the domains of perceived mothering have significant positive correlation with the self image except the domain 'D But the relationship between self-image and PM_D is not significant, $p(591) = .06, p > .05$. Thus, the hypothesis "There is a significant relation between each mode of perceived mothering and the self image of adolescents" is accepted

The study examines the relationship between perceived mothering (PM) and adolescent self-image, focusing on various domains of maternal behavior. Table 1 presents correlation coefficients indicating the strength and direction of this relationship. Overall, there is a consistent pattern of significant positive correlations between perceived mothering and adolescent self-image across most domains, except domain D. Domains such as acceptance, protection, indulgence, moralism, discipline, realistic role expectation, and marital adjustment show statistically significant positive correlations ranging from .21 to .35. These findings highlight the significant impact of maternal behaviors in these domains on shaping adolescent self-perception. Adolescents who perceive positive maternal behaviors, like acceptance and discipline, are more likely to have a healthier self-image, as suggested by the strength of these correlations.

The current study's findings echo those of Laursen, B., et al. (2021), focusing on the longitudinal impact of parental and peer support on adolescent self-esteem. Both studies highlight the positive contributions of both parental and peer support to adolescent self-worth, with maternal support particularly emphasized over peer support. They challenge the idea that peer relationships can fully compensate for lacking parental support, emphasizing the crucial role of family cohesion in shaping adolescent self-esteem over time. These results underscore the complex interplay between family and peer relationships in adolescent well-being, emphasizing the importance of strong familial bonds in nurturing positive self-esteem during adolescence.

Prior research, such as that by Alami et al. (2014), has also linked adolescent self-esteem closely to perceived mothering. Additionally, Curcio, Mak, and George's (2019) study on perceived maternal and paternal bonding, self-image, and

psychological distress among adolescents suggests potential gender differences, with females generally reporting lower self-esteem and higher psychological distress compared to males. However, the absence of a significant correlation in domain D, which stands for utopian expectation versus realism, is notable. Despite being part of the perceived mothering construct, the behaviors encapsulated by domain D demonstrate a weaker association with adolescent self-image, indicated by a correlation coefficient of .06 and a p-value exceeding .05. This discrepancy prompts further investigation into the specific aspects of perceived mothering represented by domain D and their impact on adolescent self-perception.

By accepting the hypothesis that there is a significant relation between each mode of perceived mothering and adolescent self-image, we affirm the overarching influence of maternal perceptions on adolescent development. While this acceptance aligns with the majority of our findings, the exception of domain D highlights the complexity inherent in the relationship between perceived mothering and adolescent self-image. This underscores the need for comprehensive understanding and targeted interventions to address all aspects of perceived mothering and their implications for adolescent well-being.

The results presented in Table 2 show that all domains of perceived fathering, except domain 'D', have a significant positive correlation with self-image among adolescents. Specifically, self-image is positively related to the dimensions of acceptance, protection, indulgence, moralism, discipline, realistic role expectation, and marital adjustment. The correlation coefficients range from .22 to .38, with p-values below .01, except for domain D, where the correlation is not significant ($\bar{r} = .07, p > .05$). This supports the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between each

mode of perceived fathering and adolescent self-image.

These findings highlight the crucial role of paternal behaviors, such as support, guidance, involvement, and consistency, in shaping adolescent self-perception. Adolescents who perceive positive paternal behaviors are more likely to have a healthier self-image. However, the lack of a significant correlation in domain D is noteworthy, suggesting a weaker association between the behaviors represented by this domain and adolescent self-image. Further exploration into the specific aspects of perceived fathering within domain D is warranted to better understand their impact on adolescent self-perception.

Accepting the hypothesis of a significant relationship between each aspect of perceived fathering and adolescent self-image emphasizes the substantial impact of paternal perceptions on adolescent development. This aligns with our study's findings, emphasizing the significance of paternal involvement and support in shaping adolescent self-perception.

Jones (2000) explored factors influencing adolescent fathers' participation in parenting, revealing a moderate negative correlation between self-image and parenting role expectations. This suggests that while adolescent fathers aspire to be involved parents, they may face challenges due to unrealistic expectations and the dual responsibilities of adolescence and fatherhood. Supportive measures and tailored parenting education are essential for adolescent fathers.

Keizer et al. (2019) highlighted culturally specific influences on adolescent self-esteem regarding parental roles. Their study, involving 76 college students aged 19.5 years, found gender disparities, particularly in the relationship with mothers. Mediation analysis indicated that domain-specific self-

esteem partially mediates the relationship between global self-esteem and the relationship with fathers, emphasizing the cultural nuances affecting parental roles on adolescent self-esteem.

The research underscores the significant link between perceived fathering and adolescent self-image. Understanding the complex interaction between paternal behaviors and adolescent self-perception informs interventions aimed at fostering positive father-child relationships and promoting healthy adolescent development.

Table 3 presents regression analysis results predicting self-image from various parenting factors. Significant positive relationships with self-image are found for perceived mothering factor PM_Acceptance (A), perceived fathering factor PF_Moralism (E), and parenting factor P_H (marital adjustment), indicating that adolescents perceiving higher levels of emotional support and guidance from both parents tend to have more positive self-images. However, predictors like PM_Indulgence (C), PM_Protection (B), PM_Discipline (F), PF_Acceptance, PF_Protection, PF_Indulgence, PF_Discipline, and PF_Realistic Role Expectation do not show significant relationships with self-image, suggesting their influence may be less pronounced. The overall model, with an R-squared of .193 and significant F-statistic, indicates that combined parenting factors account for a significant portion of self-image variance among adolescents, informing potential intervention areas. These findings align with and expand upon previous research by Buri (1989), DeHart et al. (2006), and Grove (1980), emphasizing the pivotal role of parental behavior in shaping self-esteem across developmental stages, including gender-specific effects.

Hypothesis 3 states that social competence plays a significant mediating role

in the relationship between parenting factors and self-image. The results of the mediation analysis indicate that the indirect effect of parenting factors on self-image, through social competence, is statistically significant

The indirect effect of parenting factors on self-image is tested with 95% confidence interval and null hypothesis testing. Results presented in table 4.16 indicate that the mediating effect of social competence on the relationship of father factors ($\hat{\alpha} = .11$, $p < .01$), mother factors ($\hat{\alpha} = .06$, $p < .01$) and P_H ($\hat{\alpha} = .018$, $p < .05$) on self-image are significant. Confidence intervals also does not include zero. Thus, social competence mediates the relationship between parenting factors and self-image.

Father Factors: The regression coefficient ($\hat{\alpha}$) is .11, indicating a significant indirect effect. The 95% CI ranges from .058 to .168, and since it does not include zero, the indirect effect is considered statistically significant ($p < .01$).

Mother Factors: The regression coefficient ($\hat{\alpha}$) is .06, indicating a significant indirect effect. The 95% CI ranges from .021 to .101, and since it does not include zero, the indirect effect is considered statistically significant ($p < .01$).

The dimension of marriage conflict and marital adjustment in the perceived parenting (H): The regression coefficient ($\hat{\alpha}$) is .018, indicating a significant indirect effect. The 95% CI ranges from .003 to .036, and since it does not include zero, the indirect effect is considered statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Chen and Kaplan's (2004) study emphasizes social competence as a key mediator in the relationship between parenting behaviors and adolescent self-image, advocating for interventions targeting positive parenting practices and enhancing adolescents' social skills for healthy self-image development. Their findings

underscore the intricate dynamics between parenting factors and adolescents' self-perceptions, with father factors, mother

factors, and marital adjustment all showing significant indirect effects on self-image through social competence. This perspective aligns with previous research, including Chen and Kaplan (2001), which supports social competence as a mediator in the intergenerational continuity of warm, supportive parenting. Theoretical frameworks and developmental psychology research, such as attachment theory and social learning theory, further bolster this perspective, emphasizing the critical role of parenting behaviors in shaping children's competence across various behavioral domains and their subsequent interactions with peers and familial relationships.

Major findings of the study

1. Perceived parenting showed a significant correlation with adolescent self-image.
2. Social competence played a mediating role in the relationship between perceived parenting and self-image.

Conclusion

The study, set in the psycho-social landscape of adolescents in Kerala, addresses the impact of cultural globalization, technological advancements, and challenges amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Emphasizing the significance of parenting in children's growth amidst evolving circumstances, it highlights the association between perceived parenting styles and self image of adolescents.

This research offers valuable insights for focusing on the adolescent perspective and exploring multiple dimensions of perceived parenting, enriches existing literature on adolescent development. By examining the relationships between perceived parenting styles and adolescent outcomes such as self-

image, and social competence, the study underscores the influential role of parental guidance in shaping adolescent behaviors and psychological well-being.

Key findings highlight significant correlations between perceived parenting and self-image. Particularly noteworthy is the discovery of the mediating role of social competence in the relationship between perceived parenting styles and self-image. This underscores the importance of effective parenting in fostering positive social skills among adolescents.

In conclusion, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how perceived parenting of adolescents related to the significant psychological dynamism self image and social competence of adolescents. By acknowledging the complexity of parenting dynamics and considering diverse perspectives, the study lays a solid foundation for future research and interventions aimed at promoting adolescent well-being within an ever-evolving social and cultural landscape.

Limitations and Suggestions

1. Violation of Normality Assumptions: The data collection process resulted in violations of normality assumptions, necessitating the adoption of non-parametric tests for analysis. While this approach addresses the issue, it may limit the sensitivity of the statistical analysis.

2. Lengthy Questionnaires: The utilization of time-consuming and lengthy questionnaires might have led to participant fatigue and boredom, potentially impacting the quality of responses and introducing response biases.

3. Non-parametric Tests: The necessity of resorting to non-parametric tests due to data non-normality may limit the ability to detect nuanced relationships or effects compared to parametric methods.

4. Reliance on Self-Report Measures: The use of self-report questionnaires to assess perceived parenting style may introduce response biases and inaccuracies, as adolescents' perceptions of their parents' behavior may not align with objective reality. Incorporating parental interviews could provide additional insights and enhance data accuracy.

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