



AUTONOMY AND CONTROL IN PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AND MENTAL HEALTH OF ADOLESCENT

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ABSTRACT

In the present study it has been tried to determine the relationship between mental health in students and their parent's child-rearing style. The sample consisted of 300 undergraduate students (150 boys and 150 girls) drawn by using purposive sampling method. The mean age of students was 19.22 with a standard deviation of 3.61 Akhtar's parent-child relationship scale (Jahan 2000) was used to measure parental child-rearing practices. In this study two parenting styles Autonomy and Control were used to measure parent-child relationship. Mental health was measured by using Singh and Gupta (2000) test which measures six indices of mental health namely (1) Emotional Stability, (2) Adjustment, (3) Autonomy, (4) Security-insecurity (5) Self Concept and (6) Intelligence. The main hypothesis formulated were that Children's mental health will be positively associated with permissive parental attitude and negatively associated with controlling attitude. The hypotheses have been proved. The results show that father's and mothers' democratic attitude in child-rearing affect boys' and girls' mental health differently. Boys are more influenced as compared to girls.

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

Parent-Child Relationship

For the healthy growth of any society it is essential that the adolescent youths of that society should be mentally and physically healthy and well-adjusted. The parents are to be very much cautious while handling a child. Their minor mistakes and impoverished nurturing can damage the child's personality.

Parents are defined to encompass "all those who provide significant and / or primary care for children, over a significant period of their life, without being paid as an employee," including biological parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, grandparents, other relatives and fictive kin such as godparents.

The behaviour of the individual is influenced by the family in which he is brought up. The reactions of a child that make him/her adjusted or maladjusted in the family and society are caused in the family environment. Every human child is born in a family and is looked after by mother, father or substitute. A child is loved and scored, praised and blamed, rewarded and punished according to the situation, according to his/her own behavior and also according to his/her parent's attitude. And it is assumed that human beings have an enduring biologically based need for positive response from the people most important to them. The need for positive response includes an emotional wish, desire or yearning for support, care, concern, nurturance and the like. The emotional need for positive response from parents is a powerful motivator for children. And if they don't get this need satisfied adequately by their parents, they are predisposed to respond emotionally and behaviorally in specific ways. Perceived parental rejection leads to hostility, aggression, emotional unresponsiveness, impaired self-esteem, emotional instability, feeling of insecurity, negative world view in children. Thus the interaction and emotional relationship between the child and parents shapes the child's psychological functioning and well-being as adults. The extent to which children perceive or fail to perceive parental acceptance warmth have a greater influence on their personality than their any other single experience.

Mental Health

Mental health is one of the most essential and inseparable components of health. It is considered as an integrated component of public health (Shah, 1982). Here emphasis is given upon the prevention of disease as well as maintenance and promotion of health in the community (Michael, 1982).

Mental health has been variously defined and has been recognized as an integral component of overall mental health of an individual. At present the available literature indicates that attempts have been made to define/describe the criteria or characteristics of a normal personality (Coville, Costello & Ronke, 1960; Maslow and Mittlemann 1951), positive mental health, as well as health personality from the humanistic point of view (Jourard & Landsman, 1980). Some researchers have suggested the possibilities of a variety of mental

health. However, there seems to be some agreement among mental health professionals that mental health is not the absence of mental illness. But at the same time there seems to be little consensus on the definition of positive mental health.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defined it as a complete physical, mental and social well-being and not the absence of any disease. It is the ability of human being to adjust to the world and it is a condition and level of social functioning of an individual which is socially acceptable and personally satisfying. Mental health is the basic factor that contributes to the maintenance of the physical health as well as social effectiveness (Kotheri, 2009).

In general, mental health is the ability to work and love well and a feeling of satisfaction with life (Dalal 2001, Srivastava 1984a, 1989a, 2005).

The sex of the persons may also have impact upon mental health behavior. Women have, in general greater degree of perceived lack of control in the face of stress and this leads to produce learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975) which can lead to poor development of mental health. Several attempts have been made to find out relationship between parent's behavior and the development of child's personality. Most recent clinical psychiatric research regards the quality of perceived parental rearing as a significant etiological factor with in a vulnerability model of psychopathology (Perris, Arrindell & Eisemann 1994). Here the experience of lack of emotional warmth and care, after together with overprotection ("affectionless control") during childhood has been proposed to be an important risk factor for the development of affective disorders in adulthood (Mackinnon, Henderson & Andrews 1993; Parker 1983b; Perris et al. 1996). The study of Padhi and Desh (1994) on the present parent-child relationship in India suggested that parental attitude of encouragement with warmth and verbalization was positively related with academic competence of children's.

Purpose

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of Autonomy and Control in parental attitude on their children's mental health.

Hypothesis

1. Children's mental health will be positively associated with permissive parental attitude.
2. Children's mental health will be negatively associated with controlling parental attitude.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study was conducted on the basis of purposive sampling technique. It consisted of 198 boys and 177 college girls. They mostly belonged to undergraduate classes. Their age ranged from 16 to 21 years. Their parents (N=686) were contacted at their residence and

requested to co-operate in the research and fill up the forms. After receiving the filled up forms and scrutiny data were obtained from 600 parents and 150 boys and 150 girls and were used for result analysis.

Instruments

(I) Personal data sheet- The Performa provided information about the subject's name, age, religion, educational qualification, parent's name, residence, parent's education, monthly income, etc.

(II) Parent-Child Relationship Scale (PCRS)-

It was developed by Jahan (2000). It is a test to assess parental attitude towards child rearing. The test is in the Hindi version and consists of 75 items. In this test four dimensions were considered i.e. Autonomy, Love, Control, and Hostility.

The reliability of the test is high. The test retests reliability is .84 for Autonomy, .85 for Control, .82 for Love and .78 for Hostility. The test Validity scores is .47 Autonomy, .50 for Love, -.51 for Control and -.49 for Hostility respectively.

Hence, it can safely be inferred that the constructed, Akhtar's Parent Child Relationship Scale i.e., APCS is a highly reliable and valid measure of parental attitude towards children.

(III) Mental Health Battery-

Mental Health Battery was developed by Singh & Sengupta (2000). This inventory assesses mental health of the persons through six popular indices. Emotional Stability, Overall -adjustment, Autonomy, Security -Insecurity, Self-concept and Intelligence. There are a total of 130 items. The inventory has sufficient degree of reliability and validity. The test- retest reliability of battery ranges from 0.767 to 0.876 and the odd-even reliability (corrected for full length) vary from 0.725 to 0.871. The validity coefficient of the battery against different criteria ranges from 0.601 to 0.825. The concurrent validity ranged from 0.673 to 0.823 and construct validity ranged from 0.601 to 0.681.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The scores were analyzed with Co relational analysis.

Correlation Analysis

Autonomy in Parental Attitude

The table 1 and 2 give the correlations of this dimension of Parental Attitude and boys and girls scores on six Indices of Mental Health & Total Mental Health.

TABLE 1: Correlations between scores of autonomy in parental attitude and mental health of boys

Mental Health of Boys	Autonomy in Father's Attitude	Autonomy in Mother's Attitude
Total Mental Health	.214**	.175*
Emotional Stability	.042	.076
Adjustment	.188*	.182*
Autonomy	.133	.060
Security- Insecurity	.142*	.170*
Self- Concept	.044	-.131
Intelligence	.077	.118

Note: N=150, *p<.05, **p<.01

TABLE 2: Correlations between scores of autonomy in parental attitude and mental health of girls

Mental Health of Girls	Autonomy in Father's Attitude	Autonomy in Mother's Attitude
Total Mental Health	.024	.054
Emotional Stability	.097	.022
Adjustment	.026	.018
Autonomy	.009	-.137
Security- Insecurity	.153*	.008
Self- Concept	-.045	.013
Intelligence	.039	.124

Note: N=150, *p<.05, **p<.01

The results show that mental health in children is facilitated by democratic parental treatment. When we take indices of mental health and total mental health of boys and girls, most of the correlations in this study between autonomy in parental attitude and mental health are

positive. The result of comparisons between the means of democratic and authoritarian group of children discussed earlier, agree with our contention that democratic attitude on part of the parents is favorable for children's mental health.

In the boys group there are six significant correlations where as in the girls group there is only one significant correlation. This shows that the father's and mother's democratic attitude affect boys and girls differently. Boys are more influenced in comparison to girls; Number of significant as well as positive correlations are larger in the boys group, and in the girls group only one correlation between autonomy and mental health is statistically significant. Hence the two groups boys and girls, appear to react in slightly different manner to autonomy in parents' attitude.

Control in Parental Attitude

TABLE -3: Correlations between scores of control in parental attitude and mental health of boys

Mental Health of Boys	Control in Father's Attitude	Control in Mother's Attitude
Total Mental Health	.055	.039
Emotional Stability	-.132	-.207**
Adjustment	.081	.044
Autonomy	-.043	-.033
Security- Insecurity	-.216**	-.210**
Self- Concept	.029	.029
Intelligence	-.033	-.018

Note: N=150, *p<.05, **p<.01

In the following table the correlations between controls in Parental Attitude and six indices of Mental Health and Total Mental Health scores are being presented.

TABLE -4: Correlations between scores of control in parental attitude and mental health of girls

Mental Health of Girls	Control in Father's Attitude	Control in Mother's Attitude
Total Mental Health	-.094	.036
Emotional Stability	-.189*	-.184*
Adjustment	.005	.036
Autonomy	.060	.159
Security- Insecurity	-.095	.019
Self- Concept	.080	.104
Intelligence	-.156*	.078

Note: N=150, *p<.05, **p<.01

It was hypothesized that control in parental attitude would affect mental health scores negatively. In the case of indices of mental health and total mental health although many of the correlations are small only six out of twenty eight are significant, they are mostly negative. Thus it is proved that restrictive attitude of parents has an adverse effect on children's mental health. The correlations between emotional stability scores and parental attitude of control are significant in larger number of cases in comparison to the correlations between other indices of mental health and parental attitude of control. All the scores are negative and six of them are significant at .01 or .05 level. A comparison between boys and girls group shows that attitude of control has definite facilitative effect on security in boys.

In the boys group correlations are significant and all are at .01 levels and in the girls group only two are significant and both are significant at .05 level. It can be said that there is some differences between the boys and girls so far as the effect of controlling father and controlling mother are concerned.

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the finding of the present study the following conclusions have been drawn:

The first hypothesis that Children's mental health will be positively associated with permissive parental attitude has been proved in boy's mother and fathers, but this has not been proved in girls group.

The second hypothesis that Children's mental health will be negatively associated with controlling parental attitude have not been proved in both boys and girls group.

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