

## Parental discipline and psychological wellbeing of adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

Parents at their level provide care and education related to personal and social norms to their children. Discipline is a type of strategy parents use to discourage inappropriate behavior and accomplish compliance from their children. Disciplining adolescence is more challenging because at this stage they go through various biological and psychological challenges. Adolescents are argumentative and have lesser experience. During this vulnerable stage parents' failure to provide care and attention will affect adversely on their development including their wellbeing. Present study aimed to explore the relationship between disciplining techniques used by parents and psychological wellbeing of adolescents. To assess disciplining techniques five point rating scale was developed which consisted twenty statements. Based on selected dimensions of psychological wellbeing, only eighteen items measuring Autonomy, Positive relations with others and self-acceptance were selected from Ryff's psychological wellbeing scale. The study was conducted on total 242 adolescents both boys and girls age range varying between 13 and 18 years. Pearson's correlation was computed to correlate eight disciplining techniques used by parents and three dimensions of psychological wellbeing of adolescents. In case of psychological aggression r values -.196 and -.294 exhibited significant negative correlation with positive relation with others and self-acceptance respectively. Time out, corporal punishment and penalty also confirmed significant negative correlation with positive relation with others and self-acceptance. Reward as positive technique used by parents showed positive correlation with autonomy and self-acceptance in adolescents.

**Keywords:** *Autonomy, Disciplining techniques, Psychological aggression, positive relations, self-acceptance, wellbeing.*

**P**arental involvement in growing children is essential. A good quality level of parental involvement contributes development of positive traits in growing children including adolescents. Moreover, discipline as parental involvement in early years remains as one of the major determinants of overall growth and development. The prime aim of parental involvement is to provide care. Along with care, self-dependence, social, and personal values are also instilled by parents in their children. But the process of equipping adolescents with all knowledge and skills is very challenging. Adolescents at this stage seek independence and any involvement by people around not really accepted by them, though its for their

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Received: December 23, 2019; Revision Received: December 26, 2019; Accepted: December 30, 2019

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betterment and development. Adolescents are ego-centric and are not likely to look at the logic positively used by adults. Adolescents can poke the logic of adults including parents. Any harsh treatment used during such vulnerable time can lead to various psycho emotional problems in adolescents. Hence, positive parenting is essential for adolescent boys and girls.

### *Parenting*

Parenting refers to the activity of raising a child rather than a biological relationship. (Davies,2000). Active involvement of father and mother has equal weightage. Moreover, genuine involvement by both parents results in integral development at least until adolescence.

In recent years, the substantial gain has been made in our understanding of influence parenting behaviors and styles on adolescents' emotional and behavioral outcomes (Donna, 2014). One of the most important functions of parenting is disciplining. According to Locke & Prinz, 2004, Parental discipline is an important aspect of parenting and refers to strategies that parents use to discourage inappropriate behavior and to gain compliance from their children.

According to Morris and Myton (1986), disciplinary action should help a child in changing from outer control to inner control, acquiring a desire for consideration of others, developing an appropriate manner of interaction with the world outside the family.

Disciplining especially adolescents is very important as it contributes acceptable and appropriate behavior, helps adolescents learn self-discipline, and develop a healthy conscience and self-control. It raises emotionally mature adults. It also helps to avoid negative behaviors that are harmful and dangerous for adolescents themselves as well as others. Discipline helps in shaping behavior regarding the relationship with others, social skills, self-restraints and adjustment to societal norms (Kaye, 1986).

Adolescents today encounter difficulties and more life challenges than the previous generation, and yet they are provided very less guidance and intervention for their personal development (Pajares and Urdan, 2006). The biological and psychological turmoil within the adolescents and other factors like an unhealthy family system and inadequate parenting, poverty, child abuse, lower socioeconomic status, academic pressure and environment, peer pressure etc. aggravate the problems faced by adolescents.

UNICEF in its report in the year 2009 stated that young people below 25 years of age represent almost 50 per cent of the world's population. India has the largest population of adolescents in the world with 243 million individuals aged between 10-19 years. According to the UNICEF report 2012, each year 20 per cent of adolescents experience mental health problem. Looking at this scene, it could be realized that, parenting is crucial which can have either positive or negative impact on children. The current study aims to establish the link between parental discipline techniques and dimensions the psychological wellbeing of adolescents namely, Autonomy, Positive regard with others, and Self-acceptance.

The most commonly used both positive as well as negative disciplining techniques are discussed below.

**1. Psychological Aggression:** Psychological Aggression is a communication that intended to cause the child to experience psychological pain. The communicative act may be active/passive or verbal/nonverbal. (Solomon & Serres 1999).The term Psychological Aggression is generally used interchangeably with terms such as emotional abuse, emotional

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maltreatment, psychological maltreatment, psychological abuse, and verbal/symbolic aggression (Yvonne and Vissing 1991). Yelling, screaming, name-calling, threatening to punish the adolescent are examples of psychological aggression.

**2. Time Out:** It is a procedure in which an individual child is removed from the reinforcing environment to decrease the future probability of undesired behavior.

**3. Corporal Punishment:** Corporal Punishment refers to the use of physical force to cause the child to just experience pain and not cause injury, for purposes of correction or control of the child's behavior (Straus, 2001). Examples of it include spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting with an object.

**4. Parental Supervision:** Parental Supervision is a technique that involves looking after and monitoring adolescent's activities. Examples of parental supervision are knowing where the adolescent is, not ignoring the adolescent's behavior

**5. Withdrawal of Physical affection:** It refers to the deprivation of warmth and love given to adolescents as a punishment for inappropriate behavior.

**6. Inductive techniques:** It is a method to induce desirable behavior by explaining the adolescent, teaching the adolescent the desirable behavior, reasoning, and negotiating with the adolescent.

**7. Penalty:** It is a removal of something pleasant or adding something unpleasant if an adolescent displays undesirable behavior. Example of penalty, not letting the adolescent go out to play or giving him extra work as punishment.

**8. Reward:** A reward is a positive reinforcement when employed increases the likelihood of favorable behavior. The reward as per individual child can take many forms, including tangible like material motivators such as presenting the book, cycle or any other items liked by adolescents and intangible motivators, such as verbal praise, smiles, pats on the back, hugs, extra attention.

**9. Setting limits:** Here parents impose structure, system or create a boundary, which a child needs to obey. Rules are boundaries for adolescents so they can learn to live cooperatively with others, to teach them the difference between right and wrong, and to protect them from harmful situations.

Adolescents have varied reactions to such type of discipline techniques. In case of disagreement, adolescents are likely to get into arguments with parents. In such a situation, inappropriate parenting results in indiscipline in adolescents and collectively adversely affects the emotional status of adolescents. Hence, while disciplining them there should be conscious efforts to assure development of positive emotions in them at this crucial stage of life. Experiences of positive emotions will enable adolescents to develop trust. Positive emotions will help them to build skills that are essential to become positive and healthy growing adult.

### **Psychological Wellbeing**

Psychological wellbeing is a state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy. It is inter and intra-individual levels of positive functioning that can include one's relatedness with others besides self-referent attitudes that include one's sense of mastery and personal growth (Richard et al., 2016)

Psychological well-being is understood by measures of control of self and events, happiness, social involvement, self-esteem, mental balance and sociability. World Health Organization (WHO) describes psychological health as a state of mental wellness allowing individuals to realise their potential, to cope with their life demands, to work productively, and to contribute to society.

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Carol Ryff has identified six dimensions in psychological wellbeing, which are as follows:

1. **Autonomy:** Autonomy is the ability to be self-determining, independent and to regulate own behavior.
2. **Positive relations with others:** It is the ability to have warm and trusting interpersonal relationships, to identify with others and to be associated with others and learn from them.
3. **Self-acceptance:** It is the ability to self-actualize, have optimal functioning, to be mature, and have a positive attitude towards oneself.
4. **Environmental mastery:** It is the ability to choose and imagine environment that is suitable to whom we are as a person and to be flexible in various environmental settings.
5. **Purpose in life:** It is the ability to have direction, purpose and meaning in our lives.
6. **Personal growth:** It is the ability to continue to develop our potential and to grow and expand as a person.

First, three dimensions i.e. Autonomy, Positive relations with others and Self-acceptance are major concerns of adolescence stage. The adolescent is in the process of searching their self and establishing their identities in personal and social contexts. At this stage, they have less knowledge and experience. For a smooth developmental transition to young adulthood, the role of supportive parenting is essential during adolescents. Hence, these three dimensions are studied. Effective discipline promotes happy and emotionally healthy children (Friedman,1986) whereas ineffective discipline hampers the wellbeing of the adolescent.

Adolescents who have good psychological wellbeing can learn better and are more likely to achieve their social, academic and training potential whereas, adolescents who have poor psychological wellbeing will have difficulty in accomplishing their social, academic, and training potential. Poor psychological wellbeing will also have long-term effects like difficulties with relationships, education, and family relationship. Adolescents with poor psychological wellbeing may indulgent in crime and will get socially excluded. Hence, the role of discipline especially by parents as a base becomes essential to enhance and sustain psychological wellbeing.

Therefore, scientific inquiry designed to explore the relationship between discipline techniques and dimensions of psychological wellbeing.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Sample*

The study was conducted on 242 adolescents including both boys and girls with a 1:1 ratio. Adolescents age ranged between 13 and 18 were identified. After a brief explanation about research, both tools were administered which took around 20 minutes. Data were tabulated and Pearson's correlation was employed to examine the relationship between discipline techniques used by parents and dimensions of the wellbeing of adolescents. It is a quantitative study correlating individual discipline techniques used by parents and dimensions of psychological well-being among adolescents.

### *Instruments*

Two tools were administered on adolescents.

1. **Descriptive five-point Rating scale:** To measure disciplining five point rating scale was constructed consisting of 20 statements and each statement has five responses such as Always, Frequently, Sometimes, Hardly and Never. The adolescents had to put a tick mark on any one of the five responses applicable to them. The obtained

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responses helped to identify particular, disciplining techniques used by their parents on them. There were also 3 open-ended questions developed to reassure practiced discipline techniques on them. Out of 20 items, positively scored items were no. 3, 5, 11, 12, 20 and item no. 1,2,4,6,7,8,9,10,13,14,15,16,17,18,19 were negatively scored.

- Riff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale:** To assess the psychological wellbeing of adolescents, Riffs Psychological Wellbeing Scale was adapted. The original scale measures 6 dimensions of wellbeing i.e. Autonomy, Environmental mastery, Personal growth, Positive relation with others, Purpose in life, Self-acceptance out of which only 3 dimensions namely Autonomy, Positive relation with others and Self-acceptance were selected for investigation. Based on selected dimensions of psychological wellbeing, only 18 items measuring said dimensions were adopted. Autonomy was measured with item nos.1,4,7,11,14,18; Positive Relations With Others was assessed with item nos. 2,5,8,10,12,15; Self-Acceptance was measured with item nos. 3,6,9,13,16,17. Positive scoring was decided in case of items 2, 3, 4,7,8,9,13,14,15. Negative scoring carried out in case of item no. 1,5,6,10,11,12,16,17,18

### Procedure

Adolescents both boys and girls between the age group 13 to 18 were identified. The basic purpose of the study was briefly explained to them. Those who were ready to respond both the tools were included as sample. Followed by Descriptive five point rating scale which measured disciplining techniques, Ryff's Psychological wellbeing scale was administered. The responses were classified and scoring was carried out and correlation values were obtained. Individual relationships between disciplining techniques and dimensions of psychological wellbeing were discussed by referring respective *r* values.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Table No.1 Correlation between parental discipline techniques and three dimensions of psychological wellbeing in adolescents.*

Sr. No	Types of Parental Discipline	N	Autonomy <i>r</i> value	Positive Regard with others <i>r</i> value	Self-Acceptance <i>r</i> value
1	Psychological aggression	242	-.123 (.057)	<b>-.196*</b> (.002)	<b>-.294**</b> (.000)
2	Time Out	242	-.080 (.281)	<b>-.196**</b> (.002)	<b>-.134*</b> (.026)
3	Corporal Punishment	242	<b>-.196**</b> (.008)	<b>-.202**</b> (.002)	<b>-.277**</b> (.000)
4	Parental Supervision	242	-.018 (.785)	-.101 (.116)	-.052 (.424)
5	Withdrawal of Physical affection	242	-.015 (.821)	-.081 (.211)	<b>-.150*</b> (.020)
6	Inductive Technique	242	.075 (.256)	.050 (.437)	-.003 (.968)
7	Penalty as a Disciplining technique	242	<b>-.153*</b> (.017)	<b>-.195**</b> (.002)	<b>-.210**</b> (.001)
8	Reward	242	<b>.209**</b> (.001)	.061 (.346)	<b>.186**</b> (.004)
9	Setting Limits as a Discipline technique	242	.022 (.729)	.022 (.963)	.094 (.143)

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$

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Correlation values were computed, levels of significance determined and predominant correlations between disciplining techniques and psychological wellbeing discussed. Parents have been using different strategies to bring up their children. The main aim of using different discipline techniques by parents is to bring positive and desired change in their adolescent children.

### ***1. Psychological Aggression***

It is a disciplining technique used by parents is a type of communication intended to cause a child to experience psychological pain. The communicative act may be active, passive, verbal, or nonverbal. Obtained  $r$ -value is  $-.196$  that established significant negative correlation at  $0.05$  level between psychological aggression by parents and positive relationships with others in adolescents. Results stated that more the use of psychological aggression as a disciplining technique lesser the scores on positive relationships with others is found in adolescents, which meant psychological aggression such as yelling, screaming, name-calling, threatening to punish the adolescent harm tendency to relate positively with others in adolescents. Pesnick et.al. in 1997, with a study conclude that, the single most consistent predictor of adolescents' mental health and wellbeing is the quality of the relationship the young people have with their parents.

The  $r$ -value  $-.294$  also establishes a significantly strong negative correlation between Psychological Aggression as a disciplining used by parents and self-acceptance in adolescents at  $0.01$  level. Thus, it can be said that more the use of psychological aggression as a disciplining technique by parents lesser the scores on self-acceptance found among adolescents.

Based on this results it can be concluded that, adolescents who face more psychological aggression by parents have difficulty to develop warm and trusting interpersonal relationships, and such adolescents also have difficulty to identify themselves and be with others. Psychological aggression withholds adolescents from learning from others to self-actualize.

### ***2. Time-out***

It is another type of disciplining technique is used by parents. It is a procedure in which one is removed from the reinforcing environment to decrease the future probability of undesired behavior. In this regard, there is no statistical difference indicating any correlation between time out and autonomy in adolescents. But obtained  $r$ -value  $-.196$  signifies negative correlation between time out as a disciplining technique and positive relation with others as a psychological wellbeing dimension in adolescents. This result establishes significant negative correlation between time out and positive relation with others at the  $0.01$  level. This result meant that, if the adolescent is given more time out as discipline technique it results in lesser scores on positive relationships with others. As an impact of this, adolescents face difficulty in developing positive relationships with others. With the base of this result parents should be made aware of dangers of using time out as disciplining technique for their children.

The  $r$ -value  $-.143$  which also established a significant negative correlation between time out as a disciplining technique and self-acceptance. The result concluded that adolescents who face more time out as discipline measure by parents have difficulty to develop warm and trusting interpersonal relationships.

### **3. Corporal Punishment**

It refers to the use of physical force to cause pain and not cause injury, for correction or control of undesired behavior (Straus, 2001). Examples of Corporal Punishment include spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting with an object. This practice is unfortunately still prevalent. The strongest negative correlation is found in the case of corporal punishment and all three dimensions of psychological wellbeing among adolescents.

The obtained  $r$ -value is  $-.169$ , which established a significant negative correlation between corporal punishment as a disciplining technique and autonomy in adolescents at 0.01 level of significance. Thus, it is empirically proved that corporal punishment given adversely affects autonomy and ability to be self-determining. The parents are discouraged to use corporal punishment because it damages the psychological wellbeing of adolescents.

The obtained  $r$ -value is  $-.202$  that established a significant negative correlation between Corporal Punishment as a disciplining technique and tendency to relate positively with others. Thus it can be said that more the use of corporal punishment as a disciplining technique lesser the scores on positive relationships with others. The punishment given by parents hampers the ability of adolescence to develop warm and trusting interpersonal relationships. It lessens also the scope to learn from others. This kind of effect on adolescents during early may lead to serious damage to psychological wellbeing.

The  $r$ -value  $-.277$  also establishes the significant negative correlation between corporal punishment as a disciplining technique and self-acceptance. Thus, it can be concluded that more the use of corporal punishment as a disciplining technique lesser the scores on self-acceptance noted among adolescents. Based on the result it can be stated that adolescents who receive more corporal punishment from parents have difficulty to self-actualize and develop a positive attitude towards them.

### **4. Parental Supervision**

This is a technique that involves looking after and monitoring adolescents' activities. Examples of Parental Supervision is knowing where the adolescent is, not ignoring the adolescent's behavior. When a correlation between parental supervision and three dimensions were examined, no significant correlation was seen but  $r$  values obtained were negative. However, not significant but showed a negative correlation. This result indicates that, continuous supervision by parents can harm psychological wellbeing of adolescents.

### **5. Withdrawal of physical affection**

Withdrawal of Physical affection, which refers to the deprivation of warmth and love given to adolescents as a punishment for inappropriate behavior. The correlation between the withdrawal of physical affection by parents and autonomy and a positive relationship with others in adolescents was found insignificant.

An obtained  $r$ -value  $-.150$ , indicated a significant negative correlation at 0.05 level of significance between the withdrawal of physical affection as a disciplining technique and self-acceptance among adolescents. Thus, it can be said that more the use of withdrawal of physical affection as a disciplining technique lesser the scores on self-acceptance found among adolescents. From this result, it is evident that adolescents who are withdrawn of physical affection by their parents are unable to accept their ability to self-actualize, function effectively and they are less likely to develop a positive attitude towards themselves.

### **6. Inductive technique**

There is no statistically significant correlation found between inductive technique which teaches adolescents the desirable behaviors by reasoning, teaching and negotiating and three dimensions of psychological wellbeing i.e. autonomy, positive relations with others and self-acceptance. Adolescents being self-absorbed, the use of reasoning, teaching or negotiating as a disciplining technique may not be any way responded by adolescents. Only acceptance and respect given to them will result in to desired behavior.

### **7. Penalty**

The penalty is defined as the removal of something pleasant or adding something unpleasant by parents if an adolescent display undesirable behavior. Example of penalty is not letting the adolescent go out to play or giving him extra work as punishment. This type of disciplining technique is also very common used by parents.

There is a perfect negative correlation evident between the use of penalty as disciplining technique used for the adolescent child by parents and three dimensions of psychological wellbeing.

The obtained  $r$ -value  $-.153$  established significant negative correlation at  $0.05$  level between penalty as a disciplining technique and autonomy in adolescents. Thus it can be said that more the use of penalty as a disciplining technique lesser the scores on autonomy. Which means the use of penalty hampers ability to be self-determined, and be independent and to regulate own behavior.

The  $r$ -value obtained  $-.194$  that stated a significant negative correlation between penalty as a disciplining technique and positive relation with others in adolescents at  $0.01$  level. Based on this result it is concluded that, a penalty by parents limits an ability to develop warm and trusting interpersonal relationships. Experience of the penalty also controls adolescents from identifying and learning from others.

The  $r$ -value  $-.210$  also established significant negative correlation at  $0.01$  level of significance between penalty as a disciplining technique and self-acceptance. Adolescents who face more penalty tend to be immature and may develop a negative attitude towards themselves. They also become dependent and have difficulty regulating their behavior by themselves.

### **8. Reward**

A reward as reinforcement delivered as a parenting technique increases the likelihood of a favorable behavior. The reward can take many forms, including tangible like material motivators such as presenting book, cycle or any other items liked by adolescents and intangible motivators, such as verbal praise, smiles, pats on the back, hugs, extra attention.

The obtained  $r$ -value  $.209$  that, confirmed a significant positive correlation between reward as a disciplining technique and autonomy in adolescents. The reward given by parents develops independence in adolescent, which is a positive trait.

Though not significant  $r$ -value  $.061$  indicated the positive direction of the correlation between reward as a parental discipline technique and tendency in adolescents to develop positive relations with others. The obtained  $r$ -value is  $.186$  which, established significantly strong positive correlation between them at  $0.01$  level which meant use of reward as a disciplining technique resulted in maturity, optimal functioning, and positive attitude among adolescents.



### 9. Setting Limits

In this technique, parents impose structure, system or create a boundary that a child needs to obey. Rules are set for adolescence so they can learn to live cooperatively with others, to teach them the difference between right and wrong, and to protect them from harmful situations. In this regard correlation coefficient values defining the relationship between setting limits and psychological wellbeing dimensions autonomy, positive relations with others and self-acceptance were not significant.

From the observation of the result, it is evident that, negative disciplining techniques used by parents have only negative effects on psychological wellbeing of adolescent children. The desired behavior is only assured in adolescents by giving them positive reinforcement. Management and employment of tangible and intangible rewards by parents for adolescents is the key for psychological wellbeing among adolescents.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The 50 % of results of research established a significant correlation between parental disciplining techniques and three dimensions of psychological wellbeing i.e. autonomy, positive relations with others and self-acceptance.

- Use of psychological aggression, time out, corporal punishment as disciplining techniques by parents hampers positive relationship with others and self-acceptance in adolescents.
- Use of corporal punishment and penalty to discipline adolescents hamper their ability of self-regulating behavior, maintain positive relations with others and self-acceptance tendency.
- Withdrawal of physical affection significantly damages self-acceptance in adolescents
- Parental supervision, inductive reasoning and setting a limit as disciplining techniques do not specify any significant positive or negative correlation with autonomy, positive regard with others and self-acceptance in adolescents.
- Reward by parents significantly contributes to the development of autonomy and self-acceptance of adolescents as positive traits which are indicators of psychological wellbeing.

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### **Research delimitations**

Only three dimensions of psychological wellbeing were selected for the study.

### **Acknowledgements**

We are thankful to adolescents for responding the both the tools. We also express our gratitude towards statistician who helped us to carryout statistical analysis.

### **Statement of responsibility**

First Author was involved in conceptualization of topic, developing rationale, framing objectives, selection and development of tool, statistical interpretations and discussion. Second author was involved in framing objectives, question pool contribution, collecting review of literature, data collection, coding data.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interests.

**How to cite this article:** C Gawali & K Bedi (2019). Parental discipline and psychological wellbeing of adolescents. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 7(4), 1051-1060. DIP:18.01.123/20190704, DOI:10.25215/0704.123