

## Perceived parental warmth and parental control among adolescents with suicidal ideation

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### ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a developmental period during which rapid transitions occur in biological, cognitive, social and emotional fields of life. Parents play a major part in entertaining their children on dealing with the life challenges. Nevertheless the degree to which the styles of parenting establish suicidal behaviors among adolescents remains unclear. The major objectives of the present study were to investigate and (1) To screen out adolescents with suicidal ideation, (2) To examine the level of perceived maternal responsiveness/warmth between suicidal ideation and control group of adolescents, (3) To observe the difference in perceived maternal control between suicidal ideation and control group of adolescents, (4) To evaluate perceived paternal responsiveness/warmth and perceived paternal control between the two groups. The sample of the study is comprised of one hundred and fifty students between the age group of 17-19 years from Varanasi city, India. One hundred and fifty students studying in class 12th of urban locale were selected through the method of purposive sampling. Two scales viz. Suicide Behaviors Questionnaire – Revised (SBQ – R) and Scale of Parenting Style (SPS) were administered. The cut off scores were decided statistically i.e. M+1SD for screening the adolescents with suicidal ideation. Likewise subjects who scored between M-1SD to M+1SD were designated as controls. Final screening stands with 14 subjects each in both the groups. Mean, standard deviation, and t-tests were applied to analyze the data. The results obtained revealed significant difference between the two groups in the level of, maternal responsiveness, maternal control, paternal responsiveness and control, thereby suggesting the need of intervention for adolescents having suicidal ideation.

**Keywords:** *Adolescents, Suicidal Ideation, Maternal Responsiveness, Maternal Control, Paternal Responsiveness and Control*

Suicidal ideation, suicide attempt and suicide among children and young people have become a major global concern (WHO, 2014). Although suicide affects youngsters from all races and socioeconomic groups but rates vary substantially across states as well as across countries. India also had the third highest female suicide rate (14.7%) in the world after Losotho (24.4%) and Republic Korea (15.4%) (WHO, 2016). Nonfatal suicidal thoughts or often known as suicidal behaviors are categorized more explicitly into three groups: *suicide*

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Received: May 16, 2020; Revision Received: June 22, 2020; Accepted: June 25, 2020

## Perceived parental warmth and parental control among adolescents with suicidal ideation

*ideation*, which refers to deliberately engage in activities wished-for ending one's life; *suicide plan*, in which detailed methods for ending one's life are formulated; and *suicide attempt*, (Gliatto, Michael, Rai, & Anil, 1999) which refers to engagement in potentially self-injurious behavior in which there is at least some intent to die (Nock, Borges, Bromet, Cha, Kessler, & Lee, 2008). A large amount of literature on youth suicide refers to school-age children (7–12 years) and adolescents (13–20 years). Adolescence is the phase when most of the youngsters are vulnerable towards problem related to mental health (Orbach, 2006). This is also a period of new challenge during which one requires adjustment to changes in the self, in the family and in the peer group. In the meantime they are often confronted with high expectations, sometimes too high, from significant relatives and friends. Such situations inevitably aggravate a certain degree of vulnerability, pressure, uncertainty and a sense of losing control (Patton, et.al. 2016). In order to attend to these challenges productively and managing with these sentiments efficiently adolescents are required to have access to remarkable supporting resources.

In India, the influence of family on an individual's life is deep rooted and close relationship with a parent, parenting style and presence of other family members serve as protective factors. In nuclear families mothers customarily are more concerned about the emotional constancy of their children (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987).

According to Maccoby and Martin (1983) two main aspects underlying parental behavior, viz, parental responsiveness and parental demandingness were recognized. Parental responsiveness / parental warmth refers to the extents to which parents deliberately encourage independence, self-management and self-declaration in an accustomed and compassionate manner to children's particular requirements and needs. According to Baumrind (1971), parental demandingness / behavioral control refers to the demands exerted by parents on their kids to turn out to be incorporated to the entire family, by means of commands, punitive efforts and keenness. Therefore, the current study focuses on young adolescents aged from 15 to 24 years as they are part of the major group from previously reported suicide cases (Ying, 2013). This particular group of people is at a higher risk. Therefore, secondary school students and college students from different cultural settings meet the criteria for extensive research to be done on them. Present study is an attempt to shed light on different aspects of parenting among adolescents with suicidal ideation in Indian context.

### **Objectives**

1. To screen out adolescents with suicidal ideation.
2. To examine the level of perceived maternal responsiveness/warmth between suicidal ideation and control group of adolescents.
3. To observe the difference in perceived maternal control between suicidal ideation and control group of adolescents.
4. To evaluate perceived paternal responsiveness/warmth and perceived paternal control between the two groups.

### **Hypotheses**

1. Perceived maternal responsiveness and perceived paternal responsiveness/warmth would be less in the suicidal ideation group as compared to the control group of adolescents.
2. Perceived maternal control and perceived paternal control would be more in the suicidal ideation group as compared to the control group of adolescents.

## Perceived parental warmth and parental control among adolescents with suicidal ideation

3. Maternal responsiveness would be less than maternal control in the suicidal ideation group whereas for the control group maternal responsiveness would be more than maternal control.
4. Paternal responsiveness would be less than paternal control in the suicidal ideation group of adolescents whereas for the control group paternal responsiveness would be more than paternal control.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Sample*

The sample of the study is comprised of one hundred and fifty students between the age group of 17-19 years from Varanasi city, India. One hundred and fifty students studying in class 12<sup>th</sup> of urban locale were selected through the method of purposive sampling. Prior to the administration of the scales, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study. They were given assurance about the privacy of the data and only willing students were included in the study sample.

### *Psychometric Devices*

1. **Suicide Behaviors Questionnaire – Revised (SBQ – R) Osman et al. 2001** was used to measure suicidal behavior in adolescents. This shortened version of the SBQ consists of four questions and uses a five point rating pattern to measure the frequency of suicide ideation, the communication of suicidal thoughts to others, and the attitudes to, and expectations of, actually attempting suicide. The SBQ has high test-retest reliability ( $r = .95$ ) over a two-week period. The SBQ was negatively correlated with the Linehan Reasons for Living Inventory in female psychiatric outpatients ( $r = -.34$ ; Cotton et al., 1995).
2. **Scale of Parenting Style (SPS) by Gafoor & Kurukkan, 2014** was used to measure parenting style. It is a 38 item instrument, determining perceived parenting style of the mother and father of the students. The test items are prepared on the basis of studies done by of Diana Baumrind (1971). The test-retest coefficient was found to be 0.81 for responsiveness subscale and was 0.83 for control subscale. Criterion related validity is 0.80 for responsiveness and 0.76 for control subscale.
3. **Sociodemographic proforma** A self-prepared semi-structured proforma by the researcher was especially designed for this study. Information about sociodemographic characteristics such as age, sex, course group locale, and socioeconomic status was included.

### *Procedure*

Prior to the administration of the scales or the inventories, the participants were notified about the intention of the research. They all were secured of the privacy and were made clear that their reputation in the school would not be affected. Instructions regarding demographic proforma and Scale of Parenting Style were delivered to the participants and all the queries were clarified concerning the response style and item statements of the scales. After checking all the answer sheets, scoring was done. Students scored 7 or more on SBQ-R were considered as suicidal ideation group and having scored less than 7 were designated as control group. The obtained data were tabulated and analyzed for both the groups.

## RESULTS

**Table 1. Descriptive measures of suicidal ideation group and control group in terms of screening tool.**

Screening Measure	Groups		
		Adolescents with suicidal ideation (N=14)	Control (N=14)
Suicide Behaviour Questionnaire	M	10.00	3.64
	SD	2.48	0.74

Total SBQ - R cutoff score of > 7

Validation reference: College undergraduate (Source: Osman, et al., 1998)

Table 1 reflects means and SDs of the screening tool i.e. suicide behavior questionnaire of both, suicidal ideation and control group of adolescents. It is clear from the table that adolescents with suicidal ideation has much higher mean score as compared to the control group.

**Table 2. Means, SDs and t-values for the scores of Proactive Coping Inventory of adolescents with suicidal ideation and control groups.**

Subscales of Parenting Scale		Adolescents with suicidal ideation(N=14)	Control (N=14)	t-value
Maternal Responsiveness	M	<b>60.00</b>	<b>73.64</b>	<b>4.37**</b>
	SD	9.62	6.62	
Maternal Control	M	<b>72.64</b>	<b>70.42</b>	0.75 NS
	SD	8.63	10.65	
Paternal Responsiveness	M	<b>58.85</b>	<b>72.71</b>	<b>4.01**</b>
	SD	10.72	7.17	
Paternal Control	M	<b>75.14</b>	<b>70.35</b>	<b>1.99*</b>
	SD	5.57	7.02	

\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , NS= Not significant

Table 2 presents means, SDs and t-values of various subscales of parenting style scale namely maternal responsiveness, maternal control, paternal responsiveness and paternal control of adolescents with suicidal ideation and control groups. Table reveals that when adolescents with suicidal ideation and control groups were compared, significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ) has been reported for maternal responsiveness and paternal responsiveness. It also explains that paternal control is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) whereas no significant difference in the dimension of maternal control has been obtained between the suicidal ideation and the control group of adolescents.

## DISCUSSION

The present study is an attempt to compare major dimensions of perceived parenting style between adolescents with suicidal ideation and the control group consisting of those adolescents who were not screened out on such measure. Table 1 illustrates the mean values of adolescents with suicidal ideation and the control group on suicide behavior questionnaire. The mean values clearly show that the group of adolescents with suicidal ideation much higher scores on the screening tool as compared to the control group. The results (Table 2) discusses that there is significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ) in maternal responsiveness between the group of suicidal ideation and control group. Thus first hypothesis gets support by a study done by Connor and Rueter (2006) which demonstrated

## **Perceived parental warmth and parental control among adolescents with suicidal ideation**

that low warmth or disappointing conversation in a parent child relationship was associated with elevated rates of suicidal behaviour among adolescents. Correspondingly, a range of coexisting investigations has observed that suicidal behavior is related to insensitive and weak parent– child relationships (Adams, Overholser, & Lehnert, 1994; Prinstein, Boergers, Spirito, Little & Grapentine, 2000).

Hipwell et al., 2008 concluded that loving, friendly, and receptive parenting patterns not only encourage supportive and affectionate behaviours in adolescents but also promote societal proficiency among them. A number of reviews establish that parent-adolescent discrepancy between adolescent and parent is an important risk factor whereas parental warmth is a defensive factor (Beautrais, Joyce, Mulder, Fergusson & Nightingale, 1996; Connor and Rueter, 2006; Martin and Waite, 1994). There remains a dearth of literature in verifying father's role in the assessment of suicidal ideation among adolescents particularly with reference to Indian context. Present study is an attempt to provide fundamental information depicting father's warmth and control in the development of adolescents. Tousignant et al (1993) emphasized the importance of father–child relationship because unhealthy relationship between father and adolescent dispense stronger association with suicide risk than disintegrated family. Present investigation also affirms that mothers tend to be considered as more sympathetic, affectionate, compassionate and gentle while Fathers tend to be perceived as more tough and disciplined and more concerned with the demands of propriety and necessity (Ho, 1987; Shek, 1995).

Further research has analyzed that poor mother–child conversation (measured by parent's report) may be related to suicide in both broken and intact families, whereas poor father–child conversation tended to be more harmful leading to risk of suicide in intact families also (Gould et al., 1998). Third hypothesis is partially accepted as the difference between maternal demandingness of suicidal ideation group and control group has been obtained but the difference is not statistically significant indicating that parents of adolescents with suicidal ideation are being perceived as over controlling, intrusive, and interfering with the autonomy of the child (Adam, Keller, West, Larose, & Goszer, 1994).

Parents characterized as low in care, warmth, less communicating and high in negative control tend to use harsh and disciplinary strategies on their children (Chen, Dong & Zhou, 1997). Similar results have been analyzed in the present study where maternal and paternal control has been found to be more as compared to responsiveness among the adolescents having suicidal ideation.

As a concluding remark it can be stated that parents who are comparatively insensitive promote suicidal thoughts in their children. Another plausible condition for adolescents having suicidal ideation may be weak and insecure interactions with the parents. Such adolescents tend to perceive their parents more negatively than do control group of adolescents. Che Din, Ibrahim, Amit, Kadir, and Halim (2018) conducted a survey in Malaysia and suggested that cultural and social values play an important role in defending adolescents who are likely to develop suicidal behaviour. Hence intervention programmes aimed at promoting well being such as social skill and emotion regulation training as well as parental counseling may become an efficient avenue for prevention of suicidal ideation. Raj, et.al. (2018) conducted a study on adolescents with depression and suicidal behavior to evaluate the effectiveness of mindfulness-based cognitive behaviour therapy. The analysis revealed that therapy served as an effective medium to enhance the psychological functioning of depressive and suicidal adolescents.

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## Perceived parental warmth and parental control among adolescents with suicidal ideation

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### **Acknowledgements**

The author appreciates support of ICSSR and all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** S Chattopadhyay & S Joshi (2020). Perceived parental warmth and parental control among adolescents with suicidal ideation. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 8(2), 888-894. DIP:18.01.105/20200802, DOI:10.25215/0802.105