

## The Influence of Perceived Parental Bonding on the Self- Concept of Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a transformational stage of moving from childhood where they are dependent over parents to a stage of adulthood where they are independent on their own. Many adjustment problems may arise if this developmental task is not completed says the study by Ryan and Lynch (1989). India is now a transforming society where the numbers of nuclear families have risen and the deep rooted values and traditions are changing (Overgaard, 2010). Hence the current study aimed to study the influence of parental bonding on the self- concept of adolescents. The study was focused on two main domains of parental bonding- perceived parental care and perceived parental over- protectiveness and total scores of self- concepts. 479 adolescents- 202 boys and 275 girls, ages 16- 17 years, living with both their parents from Coimbatore, Tamilnadu were chosen for the study through purposive sampling. They were administered two self- report questionnaires- parental bonding inventory and self- concept questionnaire. Regression analysis was done to find out how perceived parental bonding predicts self- concept of adolescents. The results showed that perceived parental care is a significant predictor of self- concept.

**Keywords:** *Adolescents, Parental Bonding, Emotional Autonomy, Self- Concept*

Adolescence is a critical stage in the development process. It is a critical stage because during this stage is when the adolescent forms an identity. According to Erikson's stages of psychosocial development (1968), adolescence is a stage of identity versus role confusion. Parenting also plays a crucial part in the development process. It can have both negative and positive effects on the development of adolescents. Parenting can significantly influence the identity formation in adolescents. Though adolescence is a time when peer interaction plays a major role, parent- adolescent interaction impacts identity formation. It has significant effects on the functioning of the adolescents on a cognitive, social and emotional level. Familial interaction leads to many psychopathological disorders in adolescents says attachment theory (Bowlby, 1940) and cognitive- behaviour theory (Beck, 1983) and family therapy is also the recommended treatment for those adolescents. In a longitudinal study by Waters and Deane (1985) on attachment security in infancy and adulthood, it was found that attachment at infancy has an impact on the attachment later in life either positively or negatively. Bowlby

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(1969) started to explore the parent- child interaction and later Ainsworth (1963) also joined hands and formed the attachment theory. Ainsworth and Bell (1970) found that secure attachment is the base for exploring the world and during times of threat, it is a safe haven. Sensitive parent recognises the child's need and provides warmth and aids in developing autonomy (Parker, 1983). The four parenting styles by Baumrind (1971, 1991) helps us better understand parenting. It analyses parenting behaviour based on two aspects: control and warmth. Parental control is the extent of how parents manage child's behaviour, either by being very controlling or just few demands. Parental warmth is the extent of how parents are accepting and responsive of the child's behaviour, either by being unresponsive or rejecting. Based on these two aspects, the four parenting styles formed are as follows: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved/ neglectful parenting. Authoritative parenting is more preferred style of parenting by most developmental psychologists (Steinberg, 2001) because of its balance between warmth and control. This helps the adolescent to rely on oneself and show healthy sense of autonomy. Grusec (2011) tells that protective role in the parents is born with the birth of the child to ensure their reproductive success. Successful parenting provides safe environment and appropriate emotional support. Research shows that a secure attachment is formed, when the parents respond to their children's distress in a soothing and comforting manner, which leads to positive outcomes (Bretherton, et al., 1997). Grusec (2011) also talks about the control function of the parents. The parents also exhibit control over their children to make them conscientious and meet up the societal behaviour standards. However, the children's need for autonomy and self- direction needs to be taken care of when exerting control over them. To understand control function of the parents, Grolnick, et al., (1997) gave the self- determination theory. This theory talks about motivating the child by providing their need for autonomy, competence and relatedness. Parents need to support the autonomy of the children using gentle and nonintrusive control which gives more options so that it motivates the child from within and not motivated due to external rewards. According to Grusec (2011), socialization process is smooth when the parenting domains such as protection and control are done with care so as to not disturb the autonomy and self- direction of the children.

Identity formation in adolescence includes the formation of self- concept. Identity formation has been seen as a state of well- being where the individual feels secure and is confident about their place and direction in what they do (Erikson, 1968). Self- concept is the way people perceive themselves. Self- concept keeps changing but the major development of self- concept happens during the adolescence. Self- concept has three components- ideal self, real self and public self. Ideal self is what one thinks one should be like, real self is what one is like and public self is what one thinks others think of them. Internal conflict arises when there is a wide gap between the ideal and real self. Adolescents usually idealize themselves with peers. And when the parents expect the adolescents to idealize with them, conflict arises. The adolescents' self- concept determines their self- esteem and self- confidence. Since, self- esteem and self- confidence plays an important role in academic achievement and better adjustment (Farris, et al, 2013, Ansari& Qureshi, 2013) the development of self- concept in adolescence is a very crucial phase.

Elmore (2004) talks about seven crippling parenting behaviours that keep children from becoming leaders. Firstly, parents don't allow their children experience risk because of the protective role they play. In this effort they shield the children from healthy risk taking behaviours that help development. Secondly, Parents rescue their children too early that the children are not able to learn to solve their own problems. Therefore parents allow disability in their children to become competent adults. Thirdly, parents rave too easily, that children

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start to question the objectivity of the parents. Raving easily might also lead to behaviour problems as they are not conditioned to face it. Fourthly, parents let guilt get in the way of leading well. Thinking of equality, they reward all children when one succeeds. So the children don't get it that their actions are responsible for their success, and they neither know what is intrinsic motivation nor unconditional love. Next, parents don't share their own mistakes. It is a known fact that teens are going to seek autonomy and do things their way, but as parents if they share the similar mistakes they did when they were of the same age and the lesson they learnt, parents will have the best influence in their children. The sixth point described is, parents mistaking intelligence, giftedness and influence for maturity. Just because children are intelligent or gifted in some aspects, it does not mean that they attained maturity to handle the world. It is just one aspect and hence autonomy should be given by comparing one's child's performance with other children's. Finally, parents don't practice what they preach. It is important for parents to be a model of what they want their child to be like. These are the seven crippling parental behaviours that keep the children from becoming leaders.

Moitra and Mukherjee (2010) studied how parenting behaviour impacts delinquent behaviour in adolescence. They studied the relationship between mothers' and fathers' parenting behaviour and the development of delinquent behaviour in 200 male adolescents aged 11- 18 from whom 100 were delinquents and 100 were non delinquents from the city of Calcutta, India. They found a positive relation between delinquency and, neglectful and authoritarian parenting. They also found that authoritative parenting was related to non delinquent behaviour. They also studied the impact of age and religion. Early adolescence was positively related to delinquency and religion had no impact on delinquent behaviour.

A qualitative study by Poduthase (2012) also examined the delinquent behaviour among adolescents and its relation to perceived parent- adolescent relationship. 21 adolescent boys between ages 14-17 from the Indian state, Kerala were chosen for the study. They were asked to discuss the relationship with their parents about the control, pressure and guidance from their parents. Interviews showed a lack of parenting skills among the parents of delinquent adolescents while non delinquent adolescents' parents were more involved, supported and guided them. It was also studied that parental attitude and behaviour corresponded to directly and indirectly to adolescents' behaviour.

Thompson and Zuroff (1998) explored how the dysfunctional personality of parents influences the development of dysfunctional personality in their adolescents. The study was conducted on 78 mothers of adolescent boys of age 12- 15 years. The mothers were asked to view their sons' performance on a computer problem solving task and give feedback that they think would improve their sons' performance. But the children's performance was manipulated to look as average performance. The mothers gave instructions on microphone which was recorded. The study found that dependency has very important influence- it shows how depression is passed on to generations and how autonomy is rejected which affects individuality of the adolescent.

Ansari and Qureshi (2013) studied how parental acceptance affects the self- esteem of adolescents. They studied 75 males and 75 females from ages 14 to 17. They were given the maternal and paternal acceptance rejection questionnaire (PARQ) and Rosenberg self esteem scale. They found that parental acceptance was positively related to self esteem and parental rejection to be negatively related to self esteem. It also significantly affects the functioning of

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adolescents. The study concludes that parenting is the major risk factor for the development of lower self esteem in adolescents.

### ***Objectives***

To explore if perceived parental bonding affects the self- concept of adolescents.

### ***Hypotheses***

There is an effect of perceived parental bonding on the self- concept of adolescents.

### ***Participants***

479 adolescents living with their parents, both father and mother, studying in conventional schools of Coimbatore, Tamilnadu were selected for the study by purposive sampling. Among 479 adolescents, 204 were boys and 275 were girls, of the ages 16 and 17.

### ***Variables***

The variables of the study were perceived parental bonding and self- concept. Perceived parental bonding was the independent variable and self- concept, the dependent variable.

### ***Research design***

The research design for this study was prediction design. In the present study, perceived parental care and perceived parental over- protectiveness were the two predictor variables; and self- concept was the criterion variable. The study found out how the differences in the perceived parental bonding predicted a change in self- concept.

### ***Tools***

Data was collected from adolescent boys and girls after getting informed consent. The tools used to collect data were Parental Bonding Inventory (PBI) developed by Parker, Tupling and Brown (1979), and Self- Concept Questionnaire (SCQ) developed by Saraswat (1992).

### ***Procedure***

Participants for the study were selected through purposive sampling method from schools of Coimbatore, Tamilnadu. Permission from the school authority was obtained, and then a short introduction to the challenges faced in adolescence and the need for the study were explained to the children. The children were also informed that they can quit answering the questionnaire at any point if they want to quit. Questionnaire was given to each of the children and asked to fill their age and gender first and then instructions were given to answer the questionnaire.

### ***Data analysis***

Data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. In this study, perceived parental care and perceived parental over- protectiveness were used as two independent variables or predictor variables and self- concept, the dependent variables or criterion variable. The researcher used multiple regression analysis by the simultaneous method to find the effect of perceived parental bonding on the self- concept of adolescents.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The study intended to understand the influence of perceived parental bonding on the self- concept of adolescents. Two questionnaires – Parental bonding inventory and Self- concept questionnaire- were used to collect data. The data was collected from 479 adolescents of age 16 to 19, living with their parents, from different schools in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu. Among them 204 (42.6%) were males and 275 (57.4%) were females. Parental bonding inventory has

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two domains- care and protection. The self- concept rating scale has six domains but it also has a total self- concept score. Quantitative research method was adopted for the study. The Shapiro- Wilk test was used to test normality of the data and then correlation was checked. Then multiple regression analysis was done using the simultaneous method. All analysis was done using SPSS.

The Shapiro- Wilk test for normality was done before starting with analysis. The results of the normality test are shown in the table below.

**Table 1 showing the results of Shapiro-Wilk test for normality**

	Statistics	df	Sig.
Perceived parental care	.980	479	.000
Perceived parental over- protectiveness	.993	479	.030
Self- concept	.994	479	.102

The table shows that self- concept is normally distributed at  $p < .05$  level. The other variables, perceived parental care and perceived parental over- protectiveness are not normally distributed. The data was proceeded for non- parametric analysis. Spearman's correlation was used to analyze the correlation of variables. The table below shows the results.

**Table 2 shows the Spearman's correlation between the independent and the dependent variable**

	N	Self- concept
Perceived parental care	479	.162**
Perceived parental over- protectiveness	479	-.035

\*\*correlation is significant at the 0.01 (2- tailed)

The table shows that perceived parental care is significantly correlated with self- concept at the  $p < 0.01$  level. Perceived parental over- protectiveness is not significantly correlated with self- concept.

**Hypothesis: There is an effect of perceived parental bonding on the self- concept of adolescents.**

Since perceived parental over- protectiveness is not significantly correlated with self- concept, only perceived parental care is proceeded for multiple regression analysis through simultaneous method. Multiple regression was chosen to predict self- concept through perceived parental care. The table below shows the results of multiple regression analysis.

**Table 3 shows the regression analysis of perceived parental care predicting self- concept.**

	B	$\beta$	T	R <sup>2</sup>	F	df
Perceived parental care	.475	.168	3.724	.028	13.871	478

**Dependent variable: Self- concept**

The model showing perceived parental care as predictor of self- concept is significant at  $p < 0.01$  level. The R<sup>2</sup> of the model is 0.028 which says that 2.8% of the variance of self- concept is explained by the model.

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The results show that perceived parental care is a significant predictor of self- concept of adolescents with  $\beta = 0.168$  at  $p < 0.01$  level. This result partially confirms the first hypothesis. The entire hypothesis could not be confirmed as perceived parental over- protectiveness is not significantly correlated with self- concept of adolescents.

The study done by Parish and McCluskey (1992) found the relationship between parenting styles and young adults' self- concept and evaluations of parents. Self- concept varied with regard to parental warmth but not to their restrictiveness. The parents were also rated high if they were warm compared to being restrictive. This is also explained by this current study where perceived parental care (warmth) significantly predicts self- concept while perceived parental over- protectiveness (restrictiveness) is not significantly correlated with self- concept of adolescents.

Another study by Lamborn and Nguyen (2004) says that kinship support and maternal warmth are the primary predictors of ethnic identity (self- concept). The current study also says that perceived paternal care (warmth) is a significant predictor of self- concept (identity) of adolescents.

Also the study by Lee, Harry and Kissinger (2006) on parenting practices found that parenting practices significantly affect adolescents' self- concept. Therefore, the finding of this current study verifies the previous studies in the area.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Adolescence has been pictured as a “period of developmental disturbance with characteristics of internal conflicts, psychic disequilibrium, erratic behaviour and associated sexual maturation with turmoil” (Carol, 1975). Therefore, it is very important to understand the challenges faced by adolescents for the smooth transition through this life stage. The current study aimed to learn influence of perceived parental bonding on the self- concept of adolescents. Shapiro- Wilk test for normality showed that data was not normal, so data was proceeded for non- parametric test. Spearman's correlation test showed that perceives parental care was significantly correlated with self- concept. Perceived parental over- protectiveness was not significantly correlated with self- concept.

Results showed that the model of perceived parental care predicting self- concept is significant and perceived parental care is a significant predictor of self- concept. However, the hypothesis could not be verified. The major findings of the current study is that Perceived parental care is a significant predictor of self- concept.

#### *The major implications from the study are,*

1. The study contributes to the previous studies which say that parental bonding is an important key factor in predicting the self- concept and emotional autonomy of adolescents.
2. It will help the health professionals to help the adolescents in the major crisis of adolescence development- identity formation.
3. The study could also create awareness among the parents in a transformational society.
4. The major limitations of the study are
5. The research did not look into the influence of mother and father bonding separately, on emotional autonomy and self- concept.
6. The research also did not look into the gender differences among adolescents.

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7. The researcher also did not explore the various other dimensions in the variables emotional autonomy and self- concept. Emotional autonomy had four dimensions- de-idealization of parents, non dependency on parents, individuation and perceiving parents as people and self- concept had six dimensions- physical, social, intellectual, moral, educational and temperamental self- concept.

Further research can include gender as a variable to know if gender difference influence results. Further research can also be done on the challenges parents face in parenting the children in a transformational society.

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