

Research Paper

## Assessment of the Parent-Child Relationship Among Male and Female High School Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the parent-child relationship (PCR) among male and female high school students in Nashik, Maharashtra, India, with the objective of identifying gender differences in various dimensions of PCR. A total of 100 high school students, equally divided between male and female participants (ages 12-16), were selected through a non-probability random sampling method. The Parent-Child Relationship Scale (PCRS), developed by Dr. Nalini Rao, was used to assess 10 dimensions of PCR, including areas of positive interaction (e.g., protection, love, reward) and negative interaction (e.g., punishment, neglect). The results, analyzed using t-tests, revealed significant gender differences in three dimensions: Object Punishment, Object Reward, and Protecting. Specifically, male students reported higher levels of object punishment and perceived protection, while female students experienced more object rewards. No significant differences were found in other areas such as symbolic punishment, rejecting, demanding, or loving behaviors. These findings suggest that gender influences how adolescents perceive their relationships with parents, highlighting the need for further research into how these dynamics impact adolescent development.

**Keywords:** *Parent-Child Relationship, Gender Differences, High School Students, PCRS, Object Punishment, Object Reward, Protection, Adolescents*

The parent-child relationship plays a fundamental role in shaping the emotional, cognitive, and social development of adolescents, especially during high school years, a period marked by significant psychological and social changes. Adolescence, typically spanning from ages 12 to 18, is a critical phase in an individual's development, and the family, particularly the parent-child dyad, serves as one of the primary sources of support, guidance, and emotional regulation during this time (Steinberg, 2017). In this context, understanding the dynamics of the parent-child relationship becomes crucial, particularly in how it may differ for male and female adolescents. Researchers have noted that while the adolescent years are universally challenging, the nature of the parent-child relationship may manifest differently depending on gender, influencing the emotional well-being and developmental trajectory of male and female high school students (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1996).

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Received: May 16, 2023; Revision Received: June 25, 2023; Accepted: June 30, 2023

### ***Importance of Parent-Child Relationship***

The importance of the parent-child relationship during adolescence is well-documented in developmental psychology. Studies indicate that positive parental involvement contributes to better academic performance, higher self-esteem, and greater emotional resilience among adolescents (Smetana, 2005). Conversely, poor relationships with parents, characterized by conflict, lack of communication, and emotional neglect, have been associated with negative outcomes such as depression, behavioral problems, and poor academic achievement (Amato, 2001). Given these findings, it becomes essential to assess the specific characteristics of the parent-child relationship within the high school context, where adolescents are navigating not only family dynamics but also peer interactions, academic pressure, and the onset of greater autonomy (Erikson, 1968).

### ***Gender Differences in Parent-Child Relationships***

While the parent-child relationship is significant for all adolescents, gender may influence the way these relationships unfold. Gender socialization plays a key role in shaping the way boys and girls interact with their parents. Research has shown that fathers tend to adopt a more authoritative or controlling style when parenting sons, while mothers are often seen as more nurturing and supportive, regardless of the child's gender (Lamb, 2010). Additionally, mothers tend to have more frequent and emotionally expressive interactions with daughters, which can result in a stronger emotional bond with female adolescents compared to their male counterparts (Smetana, 2005). These gendered differences in parental interactions have implications for adolescent identity development, emotional well-being, and academic outcomes (Pomerantz et al., 2007).

Gender differences in adolescent behavior and development can impact the quality of the parent-child relationship. Boys may exhibit more externalizing behaviors, such as aggression or risk-taking, which could strain relationships with parents, especially when disciplinary approaches become more rigid or punitive (Steinberg, 2017). In contrast, girls may experience greater internalizing issues, such as anxiety and depression, which could lead to more intense emotional exchanges and closeness with their mothers in particular (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). These variations suggest that the parent-child relationship may require different kinds of support for male and female adolescents, making it important to consider gender-specific factors when assessing the quality of these relationships.

### ***Relevance to High School Students***

High school students, in particular, experience unique stressors that may challenge their relationships with parents. Adolescence is a time of increasing independence, peer influence, academic pressure, and identity formation (Steinberg, 2005). As such, understanding the ways in which male and female high school students relate to their parents can provide valuable insight into how parental involvement, or lack thereof, impacts their development. For instance, high school girls may be more likely to engage in open communication with their parents about emotional issues, while boys may experience more difficulty in expressing vulnerability (Smetana, 2005). These gender-based differences may affect how support from parents is perceived and internalized by the adolescent, influencing their overall well-being and academic success.

Moreover, high school represents a critical period for academic performance and social adaptation, where the role of the parent becomes increasingly important as a source of guidance, encouragement, and support. Parental expectations, both overt and implicit, often shape adolescents' attitudes towards school and achievement (Chao, 2001). As such,

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Understanding the dynamics of the parent-child relationship in the high school setting, especially from a gendered perspective, may offer valuable insights into how these relationships influence academic motivation, achievement, and social adaptation.

The parent-child relationship is an integral part of adolescent development, influencing not only emotional well-being but also academic success and social adaptation. Gender differences in parenting styles and adolescent behavior necessitate a closer examination of how these dynamics manifest among male and female high school students. Understanding these differences is crucial for developing more effective support systems that cater to the specific needs of boys and girls during this formative period. By exploring the nuances of the parent-child relationship in high school, this research will provide valuable insights into how parental involvement can best be leveraged to promote positive outcomes for all adolescents, regardless of gender.

### *Objective of the study:*

- This study aims to investigate the parent-child relationship among male and female high school students.

### *Hypothesis:*

- There will be no significant differences between male and female high school students regarding their Parent-Child Relationships.

### *Sample:*

In the current research study, 100 high school students were systematically selected from Nashik city, located in Maharashtra State, India. The final effective sample comprised an equal distribution of gender, featuring 50 male and 50 female high school students, ensuring balanced representation.

The participants' ages ranged from 12 to 16, with a mean age of 14.78 and a standard deviation of 2.97, indicating a diverse group of adolescents. To gather this sample, a non-probability random sampling method was employed, which facilitated the selection of subjects without predetermined criteria, thereby allowing for a more inclusive range of participants. This approach was intended to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences typical within the high school demographic in the region.

### *Variables*

- **Independents variables:**  
Gender 1) Male 2) Female
- **Dependent Variables:**  
1) Parent-Child Relationship

### *Research Tools*

- **Parent Child Relationship Scale:** This scale, standardized by Dr. Nalini Rao, consists of 100 items divided into ten categories. These categories are focused on two aspects of the parent-child relationship (PCR): five areas that promote positive interaction (Cordial PCR), which include Protecting, Indifferent, Symbolic Reward, Loving, and Object Reward, and five areas that inhibit positive interaction, which are Symbolic Punishment, Rejecting, Object Punishment, Demanding, and Neglecting.

*Statistical Analysis*

The t-test used in this study.

**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**

*Table No. 1.1 Value of Gender in the Measurement of Parent-Child Relationship (PCRS)*

Dimensions of PC Relationship	Male Students		Female Students		t Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Protecting	71.69	8.04	68.18	6.26	<b>30.07**</b>
Symbolic punishment	59.4	6.01	58.39	4.37	<b>3.79<sup>NS</sup></b>
Rejecting	57.53	4.81	56.88	5.18	<b>1.73<sup>NS</sup></b>
Object punishment	52.58	6.9	55.97	6.78	<b>24.85**</b>
Demanding	60.08	5.74	59.34	5.67	<b>1.78<sup>NS</sup></b>
Indifferent	55.98	6.3	57.09	8.04	<b>2.38<sup>NS</sup></b>
Symbolic reward	68.34	7.97	67.29	7.32	<b>1.92<sup>NS</sup></b>
Loving	66.37	8.82	65.03	9.17	<b>2.29<sup>NS</sup></b>
Object reward	60.57	8.35	67.66	7.29	<b>84.78**</b>
Neglecting	60.22	5.3	59.64	5.19	<b>1.32<sup>NS</sup></b>

**\*\* Significant at 0.01 level, \* Significant at 0.05 level and NS Not Significant**

This table presents the results of a statistical analysis examining the differences between male and female students in various dimensions of the Parent-Child Relationship (PCRS). The dimensions explored include Protecting, Symbolic Punishment, Rejecting, Object Punishment, Demanding, Indifferent, Symbolic Reward, Loving, Object Reward, and Neglecting.

**Significant Differences**

The analysis reveals significant gender differences in three specific dimensions of the PCRS:

- 1. Object Punishment:** Male students reported significantly higher levels of object punishment ( $t = 24.85, p < 0.01$ ) compared to female students. This suggests that male students may experience more instances of physical punishment from their parents.
- 2. Object Reward:** Interestingly, female students reported significantly higher levels of object reward ( $t = 84.78, p < 0.01$ ) than male students. This indicates that parents may use material rewards more frequently with female children compared to male children.
- 3. Protecting:** Male students also reported significantly higher levels of perceived protection from their parents ( $t = 30.07, p < 0.01$ ) compared to female students. This might suggest that male students perceive their parents as more protective or overprotective compared to female students.

**Non-Significant Differences**

For the remaining dimensions of the PCRS, no significant gender differences were observed. This indicates that male and female students perceive their parents similarly in terms of symbolic punishment, rejecting, demanding, indifferent, symbolic reward, loving, and neglecting behaviors.

## CONCLUSION

1. The results of this study suggest that gender plays a significant role in shaping the parent-child relationship, particularly in terms of object punishment, object reward, and perceived protection.

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### Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Jadhav, D. (2023). Assessment of the Parent-Child Relationship Among Male and Female High School Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(2), 3170-3174. DIP:18.01.316.20231102, DOI:10.25215/1102.316