Effect of Parental Modernity on Rejection Sensitivity and

Self-Esteem of Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Parental Modernity is an important aspect for the psycho-social development of the child. The present study aims to study the effect of parental modernity on rejection sensitivity and self-esteem of adolescents and the relationship between rejection sensitivity and self-esteem. The research is carried out on a sample of 240 parents (including 120 fathers and 120 mothers) and their 120 children. For observing the impact of modernity of parents on their children, Individual Modernity Scale was used and administered on father and mother. Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire and Self-Esteem Inventory were used to measure the rejection sensitivity and self-esteem of children (age ranges from 14 to 19 years). The results suggest that parental modernity has an effect on the rejection sensitivity and personally perceived self of the self – esteem of adolescents. Furthermore, the rejection sensitivity has been found negatively associated with self-esteem.

Keywords: *Parental Modernity, Rejection Sensitivity, Self-Esteem and Adolescents*

The survival of the human's infant depends on its care by other, and in our Indian society this care is organized in the family under the responsibility of the parents. In India, parents bring up their children on the basis of their own childhood experiences; folklore, wisdom and close observation of other parent's etc. Parents are unaware of the psychology of child development and not having learnt the skills for effective parenting. They develop some erroneous beliefs about the nature and characteristics of the psychological needs of children. Most of these beliefs and parental behaviour guided by them have deleterious effects on child development. These beliefs are numerous and most of the parents possess only few of them. These parental beliefs are affected by modernity.

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Modernity denotes positive changes in attitudes, beliefs and values. It incorporates rational ideas, secular attitudes, belief in human efficacy, and expression of personal opinion on public issues, acceptance, of democratic norms, political participation and exposure to new experiences. Modernization is actually a process of change in ways of perceiving, expressing and behaving. Inkeles and Smith (1974) have written "The modern is defined as a mode of individual functioning, a set of dispositions to act in a certain way."

Parental modernity is a key set of attitudes or beliefs that influence child's development. Researchers (Kohn, 1977; Schaefer and Edgerton, 1981) equated low levels of parental modernity to more traditional, authoritarian beliefs. Modern (democratic) parenting beliefs and activities are more focused on encouraging self-direction in children whereas traditional parenting values assert that children must confirm to their parent's wishes. Schafer and Edgerton (1985) suggested that "high levels of parental modernity were associated with higher levels of child intelligence because parents with high levels of modernity valued their child's imagination and curiosity as well as encouraged their child's own ideas".

Rejection by others is an inherently unpleasant event to which human beings normally react with some degree of distress (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gupta, 2008). Rejection sensitivity (RS) is an individual's tendency to expect, readily perceive and react extremely to rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Research suggests that sensitive people are likely to interpret ambiguous interpersonal situations, real or imagined, as rejections and thus overreact to them (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Feldman, Khuri, & Friedman, 1994; Feldman & Downey, 1994; Brookings, Zembar, & Hochstetler, 2003; Ayduk, Zayas, et al., 2008). Heightened concern about the possibility of rejection is implicated in several maladaptive relational patterns like to be ready to become hostile, aggressive, over-accommodating or socially withdrawn (Berenson et al., 2009; Purdie & Downey, 2000). Likewise, it can lead to loneliness, anxiety, depression (McDougall, Hymel, Vaillancourt, & Mercer, 2001; Ayduk, Downey & Kim, 2001), low self–esteem, reduction of ones' ability to cope with social interactions, disruption of interpersonal functioning (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Harb, Heimberg, Fresco, Schneier, & Leibowitz, 2002; Butler, Doherty, & Potter, 2007; Ayduk et al., 2000) and even violence in romantic relationships (Robillard, 2009; Downey, Feldman, & Ayduk, 2000). Sensitivity to rejection and characteristic patterns of reacting to possible rejection are also part of the defining criteria for several psychiatric diagnoses, including social phobia, avoidant personality disorder and borderline personality disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

Throughout the lifespan, self-esteem is influenced by interpersonal relationships in a variety of contexts. The individual's positive or negative evaluation of one's own worth or value is known as self-esteem. Self-esteem is influenced by both formal and intimate interactions with one's partner, family, and peers. Of particular interest is the importance of the parent-child relationship and its contribution to adolescent self-esteem. Several child-rearing behaviours have been associated with the development of self-esteem. Research has linked many parental behaviours

and familial relationships with self-esteem in adolescence. Of the aforementioned, extensive analysis has consistently supported the influence of the following interactions as positively associated with self-esteem: level of parental support (Amato, 1989; Barber et al., 1992; Barber & Thomas, 1986; Bogenschneider, Small, & Tsay, 1997; Dekovic & Meeus, 1997; Hoelter & Harper, 1987; Joubert, 1991), low level of parental control (Amato, 1989; Barber et al., 1992; Bogenschneider et al., 1997; Demo, Small, & Savin-Williams, 1987; Feldman & Wentel, 1990), a low level of harsh parental discipline (Amato, 1989; Openshaw, et al., 1984; Joubert, 1991), and a high level of family cohesion (Amato, 1989; Dekovic & Meeus, 1997).

Modern parenting can be characterized as those behaviours which promote positive interactions between parent and child. Such behaviours include open communication, acceptance, interest, aiding in activities, praise, warmth and affection. The traditional beliefs in parenting is reflected in such tasks as how many decisions the parent makes for the child, amount of supervision they implement, and the extent and severity of the rules that they bestow on the child (Amato, 1989). When parenting style reflects a rigid, authoritarian manner adolescents tend to reject parental authority. Amato (1989) found that over-protectiveness and restrictiveness was associated with low self-esteem in adolescents.

Seemingly, individuals with low self-esteem feel to be rejected and are disapproving of others. They may lack self-confidence and social skill required for initiating and developing relationships. Also there is evidence showing that the most important source of daily stress that adults experience consists of negative social interactions and the self-esteem system has a monitoring function for social acceptance such that interpersonal rejection and social exclusion (real or perceived) are associated with lower self-esteem (Ayduk et al, 2000).

The study of Khoshkam et al (2012) found positive significant relationship between worry and rejection sensitivity and negative significant relationship between self-esteem and rejection sensitivity. Also, Ungvary and Bowker (2012) revealed that rejection sensitivity was positively related to fears of negative evaluation and low self-esteem, showing thereby that there was a relationship between rejection sensitivity and self-esteem of adolescents. Given the above background, and the dearth of researches on parental modernity in India, the necessity was felt to study the effect of parental modernity on rejection sensitivity and self-esteem of Indian adolescents and also examine the relationship between rejection sensitivity and self-esteem. The following three hypotheses were formulated for verification:
1. There would be significant effect of parental modernity on rejection sensitivity of adolescents.
2. There would be significant effect of parental modernity on self – esteem of adolescents.
3. There would be significant relationship between rejection sensitivity and self – esteem.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample comprised of 240 parents (including 120 fathers and 120 mothers) along with their 120 children. The adolescents are studying in 9th to 12th classes with age range of 14-19 years. The minimum education of the parents is 12th.

Tools

- Individual Modernity Scale developed by Inkeles and Singh (1975) was used. The individual modernity scale is a five-point Likert scale with dimensions: Personality, Socio- cultural, Political and Health. These four dimensions of the scale have statistically significant positive inter-correlations and therefore they were combined to make a total attitudinal modernity scale. Each dimension has five themes. Each theme comprises five items so that there are 100 items in the tool. A score of 300 and below is considered as traditional and a score above 300 is considered as modern. The reliability coefficient of the scale is 0.384 which is quite satisfactory. The validity of the scale has been established by computing correlations with acknowledged correlates of modernity like education, income, occupation, urban-rural residence and mass media exposure.

- Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ) developed by Downey & Feldman (1996) was used. This scale includes 18 hypothetical scenarios in which an individual makes a request to a significant other that makes him/her vulnerable to rejection. Participants are required to rate their agreement with each scenario on a 6-point Likert scale. They indicate (a) their request (anxiety over anticipated rejection; scale: 1, very unconcerned; 6, very concerned) and (b) their subjective likelihood estimate that the person(s) in each scenario will actually respond positively to their request (expectations of acceptance; scale: 1, very unlikely; 6, very likely). Downey and Feldman (1996) report an internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's α) of .83, test–retest reliability coefficients of .83 and .78 for 3 weeks and 4 months retest intervals, respectively, and supportive construct validation evidence from three additional studies (Ayduk, Zayas, et al. 2008).

- Self-Esteem Inventory developed by M.S. Parsad and G.P. Thakur (1977) was used. It has a seven point rating scale from fully satisfied to fully dissatisfied. The inventory has two parts. Part one measures personally perceived self and part two measures socially perceived self. The inventory has 30 items of basic self and 30 items of social self. Of the 30 items, 17 are socially desirable and 13 are socially undesirable. The reliability of the inventory by split half reliability co-efficient came out to be 0.82 and 0.78 for personally perceived self respectively. Retest reliability co-efficient were found for both the tests were 0.69 and 0.66 respectively for personally perceived self and socially perceived self.

Procedure

For the purpose of data collection, parents (both mother and father) and their adolescent children were contacted. The participants were brief about the purpose of the study. The Individual Modernity Scale was filled by parents. The Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire and Self-esteem

Inventory were filled by adolescents. The participants were also assuring of the confidentiality of the information obtained through the present study.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics including mean and SD were used. Independent sample t-test analysis was carried out to know the significance of the difference between the two groups. For studying the relationship between rejection sensitivity and self-esteem, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was carried out.

RESULTS

The results are presented below in the form of figures and tables.
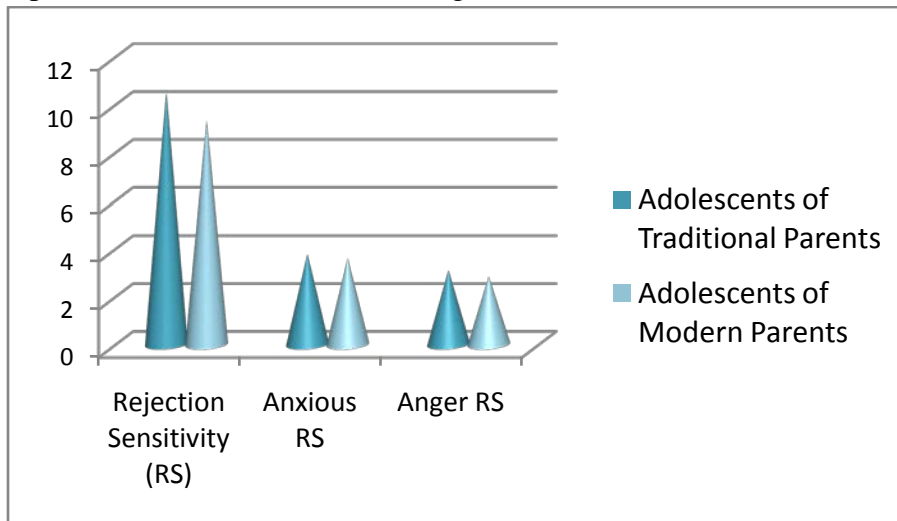

Figure 1: Mean trends of Rejection Sensitivity scores of adolescents of Traditional Parents and Modern Parents

Table1: Comparison of Rejection Sensitivity of adolescents of Traditional Parents (N=60) and Modern Parents (N=60)

Variables	Adolescents of Traditional Parent		Adolescents of Modern Parent		t-values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Rejection Sensitivity (RS)	10.58	2.77	9.37	1.70	2.89[**]
Anxious RS	3.79	.65	3.61	.61	1.52
Anger RS	3.11	.71	2.85	.55	2.25[*]

[*]p<0.05, [**]p<0.01

The results from table 1 shows that adolescents of traditional parent have significantly high score on Rejection Sensitivity (t= 2.85, p<0.01) and on anger Rejection Sensitivity (t= 2.25, p<0.05) than adolescents of modern parent. Higher score of Rejection Sensitivity indicates more Rejection Sensitivity in adolescents. The table also shows that there is non-significant difference between the two groups on anxious rejection sensitivity. Therefore the first hypothesis i.e. "there

would be a significant effect of parental modernity on rejection sensitivity of adolescents" has been retained which indicates that adolescents of modern parent possessed low rejection sensitivity as compared to adolescents of traditional parent.
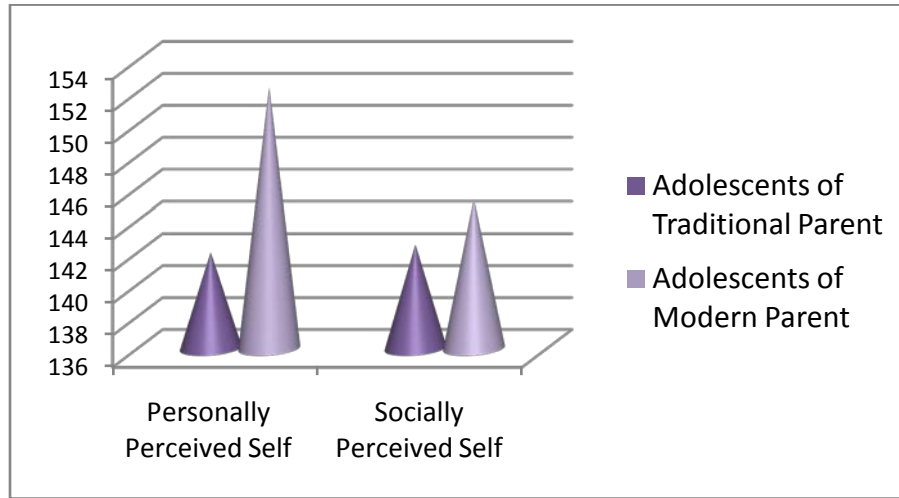

Figure 2: Mean trends of Self-Esteem scores of adolescents of Traditional Parents and Modern Parents

Table 2: Comparison of Self-Esteem of adolescent of Traditional Parents (N=60) and Modern Parents (N=60)

Variables	Adolescents of Traditional Parent		Adolescents of Modern Parent		t-values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Personally Perceived Self	142.02	14.73	152.30	11.75	4.23[**]
Socially Perceived Self	142.50	14.44	145.33	13.27	1.12

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

So far as self-esteem among adolescents of traditional parent and adolescents of modern parent is concerned, as table 2, the results shows that adolescents of traditional parent have significantly less score on personally perceived self (t= 4.23, p<0.01) than adolescents of modern parent. However, there is non-significant difference between the two groups on socially perceived self. Therefore, the second hypothesis i.e. "there would be a significant effect of parental modernity on self-esteem of adolescents" has partially been accepted.

Table 3: Correlation between measures of Rejection Sensitivity and Self-Esteem

Variables	Personally Perceived Self	Socially Perceived Self
Rejection Sensitivity (RS)	-0.54[**]	-.39[**]
Anxious RS	-0.25[**]	-.19[*]
Anger RS	-0.33[**]	-.21[*]

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

As table 3 show significant correlations between rejection sensitivity and self-esteem. Rejection sensitivity negatively related to personally perceived self (r= -0.54, p<.01) and socially perceived self (r= -0.39, p<.01). Anxious rejection sensitivity negatively related to personally perceived self (r= -0.25, p<.01) and socially perceived self (r= -0.19, p<.05). Similarly, anger rejection sensitivity negatively related to personally perceived self (r= -0.33, p<.01) and socially perceived self (r= -0.21, p<.05). Therefore, the third hypothesis i.e. "there would be a significant relationship between rejection sensitivity and self – esteem" has been accepted.

DISCUSSION

The aim of present research was to study the effect of parental modernity on rejection sensitivity and self-esteem of Indian adolescents and also examine the relationship between rejection sensitivity and self-esteem. Research results indicate that parental modernity has a big effect on the development of rejection sensitivity and self – esteem of adolescents. Rejection sensitivity in adolescents of traditional parents is higher than the adolescents of modern parents. It can be said that the situation stems from authority fight in the family, wrong beliefs of parents about bringing up children and parents' giving importance of their own works. The reason for that the children of tradition parents have higher rejection sensitivity levels than children of modern parents may be the fact that tradition parents say no to wishes and needs of their child when there is not a reason. They learn to reject and feel themselves worthless. When the personality of the child is lost, he feels himself more depersonalized. Self-confidence, self-esteem, respect and acceptance; all of them are lost. They start to feel that they have no control over their environment and they see the world as enemy and rejecting. They perceive the events from personal aspect and feel that they are the target for external powers (Savage, 2006). However, modern parents have obedience to the rules. If the interests, wishes and needs of the child are appropriate for the rules, they are accepted and the child is cared in a certain level.

Self-esteem can be defined as a positive feeling and respect for oneself. It is essentially a measure of self worth and importance. It is an important part of personality that has been shaped from very early years. During the course of time, an individual faces many situations. Depending upon the success or failure and one's reaction to every significant situation in life, self-esteem either grows stronger or considerably gets weakened. Findings of the present study revealed that self-esteem of adolescents of traditional parents and adolescents of modern parents differed significantly, which means that the self-esteem of adolescents of traditional parents is low as compared to adolescents of modern parents. Therefore, parental modernity significantly contributes to high self- esteem of the adolescents. In a study, Connor et al (2004) reported that adolescents who communicated more openly with parents were likely to have higher self-esteem score. Parker and Benson (2004) found high parental support and parental monitoring were related to greater self-esteem and lower risky behaviors. Previous researchers also found a positive association between supportive parental behaviours and adolescent self-esteem (Hoelter & Harper, 1987; Margolin et al., 1988; Amato, 1989; Barber et al., 1992; Parish & McCluskey, 1992; Bogenschneider et al., 1997).

Further, findings revealed significant negative correlation between rejection sensitivity and self-esteem. Low self-esteem ranks among the strongest predictors of emotional and behavioral problems. Compared to people with high self-esteem, people with low self-esteem tend to be more anxious, depressed, lonely, jealous, shy and generally unhappy (Baumeister, Bedner, Well & Peterson, 1989). Previous researches on this topic also suggest that low self-esteem is a risk factor for psychological distress and behavior problems. The present findings are consistent with the findings of Khoshkam et al (2012) and Ungvary and Bowker (2012) who reported negative significant relationship between rejection sensitivity and self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

Parents are charged with an awesome responsibility by society. Society expects parents to do a good job, to create healthy and productive citizens. It may be concluded that parental modernity does contribute towards the rejection sensitivity and self-esteem of adolescents. In a rapidly changing world, the cultivation of an all-round personality, sensitive an open to problems in his environment, is not only important, but is also urgent. A special care and personalized support system is therefore, impetative to nourish the potentialities of adolescent. As a society, we need to be aware that we cannot bring up children by forcing and directing them, intervening to their life, buying whatever they want or not showing our love (Dokmen, 2012). The best way of raising a child is to be tolerant, democratic, equal in love and to use the rules in suitable way. Therefore, programs like Family Education Program should be developed by the government. The findings of the present study provides some insights to parents, psychologists and researchers in promoting adolescents' psychosocial development, mental health and general well being.

So, for positive development of adolescents, it is suggested that during adolescence, self is being crystallized; it is also going through a period of revision and refinement. Parents, teachers and other professionals, who care enough to make a difference, can, through the medium of a meaningful relationship, be significant and positive forces in helping adolescents grow in healthy and self-actualizing ways. Parents should respect the child's efforts and let them know that you have confidence in their ability to do well. The results of this study indicated that the adolescents with rejection sensitivity may need supportive counseling interventions to help them adjusting to social life. The adolescents with high levels of rejection sensitivity can be helped to increase their levels of interpersonal relationship skills so as to decrease their close relationship problems. In psychological counseling and guidance studies, it would be appropriate to include applications about effective interpersonal problem solving skills to decrease the level of rejection sensitivity.

It is hoped that this study has brought to light recently developing issues in the field of Psychology in the broader framework of the 21st century, and that these new concepts will continue to be studied in relation to bettering human relationships.

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