

## Self-Esteem and Relationships with Parents: A Comparative Study of Substance Abusers and Non-Abusers

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare the Parent and adult-child relationship, and self-esteem of substance abusers with that of non-abusers. The study was carried out by using the Parent and Adult-Child Relationship questionnaire (PACQ) by Peisah et. al. (1999) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The study was conducted in the state of Haryana, India with a sample size of 100 ( Substance abusers, N=50) (Non-abusers, N=50). The results were derived using an unpaired sample t-test. Based on the results, it was concluded that substance abusers have lower self-esteem and poorer relationship with their parents as compared to non-abusers.

**Keywords:** *Self esteem, Parent and adult- child relationship, substance abuse*

Studies over the past two decades have tried to determine the origins and pathways of drug abuse and addiction. Many factors have been identified that help differentiate those more likely to abuse drugs from those less vulnerable to drug abuse. Factors associated with greater potential for drug abuse are called “risk” factors, while those associated with reduced potential for abuse are called “protective” factors. The epidemic magnitude of substance use in India is well- documented and of concern to professionals and laymen alike. The family has a central role to play in the treatment of any health problem, including substance abuse. Family work has become a strong and continuing theme of many treatment approaches (Kaufmann and Kaufman 1992 ; McCrady and Epstein 1996). Risk factors within the family have greater impact on a younger child, while association with drug-abusing peers may be a more significant risk factor for an adolescent (Gerstein and Green 1993; Kumpfer et al. 1998). The role of early child-parent relationships in the genesis of adult psychopathology has been extensively investigated, yet the impact of parent adult-child relationships on adult mental health has been little explored. Very little research, however, has assessed the degree to which a son’s or daughter’s psychological well-being and self-esteem benefits from close parent-child relations once he or she reaches adulthood. De Vaus (1994) identified four broad types of parent adult-child relationships: ‘attached’, characterized by mutual interest, support and

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## Self-Esteem and Relationships with Parents: A Comparative Study of Substance Abusers and Non-Abusers

autonomy; 'remote', characterized by mutual disinterest; 'parent-centred', where parents, perceived as excessively demanding, expect attentiveness and conformity from their adult children who struggle to individuate; and 'child-centred', where the children's lives provide the focus and the parents remain critical, interfering and unable to give up the parenting role. Adult children who recalled early parental rejection tend to be less concerned about staying in close touch with their parents, monitoring their wellbeing or providing support (Whitbeck et al., 1994); although some children remain committed to their parents despite a lack of affection (Horowitz & Schindelman, 1983) or negative feelings such as impatience, frustration and irritation (Cicerelli, 1983).

Self-esteem refers to our feelings about ourselves or the value we have for ourselves (Huitt, 2004). Positive self-esteem operates, in effect, as the immune system of consciousness, providing resistance, strength and a capacity for regeneration (Branden, 2000). Self-esteem is an important precursor of happiness and that it has a positive relationship with happiness (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Diener & Diener, 1995; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 2006).

Attitudes and behaviors of parents, acceptance of children, clear demands and respecting their actions in a certain area are of determinant affairs which cause the feeling of being valuable in children (Pervin, 1993). Perceptions of paternal behavior have been found to be somewhat more consequential for adolescent self-esteem than are perceptions of maternal behaviour (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986). On the other hand Coopersmith (1981) however concluded that external factors such as social prestige (parents), wealth, education level, and job title do not have a meaningful effect (as often imagined) on self-esteem.

**Purpose :** To compare self-esteem and relationship of adult substance abusers with their parents with that of non-abusers.

### *Hypothesis*

- a) Substance abusers will have significantly lower self-esteem compared to non-abusers.
- b) Relationship of adult substance abusers with their parents will be significantly poorer as compared to non-abusers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Sample*

It comprised of 100 participants ( 50 Substance abusers and 50 Non-abusers). 65% of the subjects were males and 35% were females. The age range was 18 years to 30 years.

**Tool's used:** The following two tools were used:

***The Parent Adult-Child Relationship Questionnaire (PACQ)*** : The Parent Adult-Child Questionnaire (PACQ) was designed by Peisah et al (1999) to measure the relationship between adults and their parents as perceived by the adult child. This is achieved by scoring the subject's relationship with their mother and father individually using 3 domains, 2 of which are common for both. The questionnaire is divided into 2 parts, namely, PACQM (Mother), and PACQF (Father), and comprise of 13 items each with a total of 26 items. The questionnaire uses a 4 point Likert scale with options being very true, moderately true, somewhat true, and not true at all. The responses are numbered 3-0 from left to right and the score for each domain is to be calculated individually. The higher the scores in each domain, the better will be the relationship between the adult child and his/her parent's. The domains are as follows:

## Self-Esteem and Relationships with Parents: A Comparative Study of Substance Abusers and Non-Abusers

### PACQM(Mother)

1. Regard-This domain assess's how an individual consider/thinks of their mother and includes statements such as "I look forward to seeing my mother.", and "I respect my mother's opinion." The maximum score that can be achieved in this domain is 15.
2. Responsibility- This domain assess how responsible the adult child feels for his/her mother and includes items such as," My mother relies on me too much", and "I feel responsible for my mother's happiness" The maximum sore that can be obtained in this domain is 24.

### PACQF(Father)

1. Regard- This domain assess's how an individual consider/thinks of their father and includes statements such as," I don' t mind putting myself out for my father", and "I know I can rely on my father to help me if I need him" The maximum score that can be obtained in this domain is 12.
2. Responsibility- This domain assess's how responsible the adult child feels for his/her father and includes items such as," Something will happen to my father if I don' t take care of him", and "My father thinks I'm good in a crisis so he calls on me all the time" The maximum score that can be obtained in this domain is 12.
3. Control- This domain measures how controlling the adult child feels his/her father is and includes items such as," If I don' t do things my father' s way he will nag me", and "I feel that my father makes too many demands on me" The maximum score that can be obtained in this domain is 15.

**2) Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965):** It is a 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The items are divided into 2 groups and are scored differently. Items 1,3,4,7, and 10 are to be scored 4-1 from left to right based on the option chosen, and items numbers 2,5,6,8, and 9 are to be scored 1-4 from left to right based on the option chosen. The sum total of both these scores yields the final score. The higher the score obtained, the better will be the self-esteem of the individual.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained were analysed using unpaired sample t-test. Descriptive statistics i.e. mean, standard deviation were computed and have been depicted in table 1:

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t
<b>Regard(Mother)</b>	Non Drug Abusers	50	11.74	2.67	.37	5.77**
	Drug Abusers	50	7.46	4.50	.63	
<b>Responsibility(Mother)</b>	Non Drug Abusers	50	15.54	3.84	.54	6.03**
	Drug Abusers	50	9.10	6.49	.91	
<b>Regard(Father)</b>	Non Drug Abusers	50	9.16	2.55	.36	4.60**
	Drug Abusers	50	6.22	3.72	.52	

## Self-Esteem and Relationships with Parents: A Comparative Study of Substance Abusers and Non-Abusers

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t
<b>Responsibility(Father)</b>	Non Drug Abusers	50	6.72	2.85	.40	3.34**
	Drug Abusers	50	4.54	3.61	.51	
<b>Control</b>	Non Drug Abusers	50	5.30	4.07	.57	2.17*
	Drug Abusers	50	7.20	4.64	.65	
<b>Self Esteem</b>	Non Drug Abusers	50	18.64	3.70	.52	3.10**
	Drug Abusers	50	15.96	4.84	.68	

**Table 1: Mean, Standard deviations and t for different domains of adult- child's relationship with mother, father and self esteem**

As is evident from table 1, non-abusers were found to have significantly greater regard for their mothers compared to that of abusers ( $t = 5.7 > .01$ ). Non-abusers have a greater sense of responsibility for their mothers ( $t = 6.03 > .01$ ).

The results also indicated that abusers have lower regard for their father as compared to non-abusers ( $t = 4.60 > .01$ ). Abusers feel lower sense of responsibility towards their father as compared to non-abusers ( $t = 3.34 > .01$ ). Abusers tend to have a greater feeling of being controlled by their father and may have a lower sense of control over their lives ( $t = 2.17 > .05$ ). The above findings provide support to the hypothesis that relationship of substance abusers with their parents will be significantly poorer as compared to non-abusers.

The results also reveal that substance abusers have scored significantly lower on the variable of self-esteem compared to non-abusers ( $t = 3.10 > .01$ ). The hypothesis that substance abusers will have significantly lower self-esteem compared to non-abusers has been supported by the findings of the present study.

### **Implications**

The results indicate towards the need for designing brief family-focused interventions for the general population. These interventions can positively change specific parenting behaviour reducing later risks of drug abuse. Similarly school based programs for boosting self-esteem of adolescents can also be effective in preventing drug abuse.

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## Self-Esteem and Relationships with Parents: A Comparative Study of Substance Abusers and Non-Abusers

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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