

## **PARENTING STYLE IN RELATION TO BEHAVIORAL PROBLEM OF ADOLESCENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study aimed to examine difference in adolescents' behavioral problem among parenting styles. On the study, 854(male=427, Females=427) students between ages 12-18 were participated. Youth Self-Report and parenting style inventory were used to collect the data. Data were analyzed using Mean, Median, Independent t-test, ANOV and Post Hoc Multiple Mean Comparison Test. By using median split procedure adolescents' families were classified into four groups (Authoritative, Authoritarian, Indulgent and Neglectful) based on adolescents' response to the parenting style inventory. The results indicate that parenting style appears to explain a substantial amount of variation in adolescents' behavioral problem. Furthermore, adolescents from authoritative parenting style scored significantly less in behavioral problem than adolescents from the authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful parenting styles. Moreover there were no significant differences between adolescents from authoritarian and indulgent parenting styles in the score of behavioral problem. Whereas adolescents from neglectful parenting score high in behavioral problem which is quite more than the score of adolescents from authoritative, authoritarian and indulgent parenting styles. In addition, there was significant difference in adolescents' behavioral problems among age groups. Besides, results of independent t-test reveal that there was no significant difference in adolescents' behavioral problem between males and females.*

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Behavioral Problem, Parenting Style

### **INTRODUCTION**

An adolescent may be best described as one who is not alone strange to others but also strange to himself or herself. It is because, an adolescent is marked by rapid physical changes, development of secondary sex characteristics, and concomitant psychological changes. The adolescents therefore strive for self-identity due to feelings of uncertainty and role ambiguity as they are neither children nor adults. They strive for recognition and independence and when denied they become rebellious and undergo stress and tension. In addition there is increased competition in school setting and the parental expectations increase with regard to the performance of the adolescents. During such a vulnerable state, adolescents require both support and direction to proceed with confidence to meet the demands from various fronts.

Different theoretical perspectives such as psychoanalytic, psychosocial, behavioristic and ecological systems emphasized different processes through which parents influence the development of adolescents and their writings stressed on different components of styles of parenting (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). In this respect, relevant theories that emphasize the impact of family on adolescent development are mentioned. According to psychoanalytic theory, the basis of human behavior is to be found in various unconscious acts being practiced beyond one's awareness. In addition, psychoanalytic theories stress that the child's early experience with parents extensively shapes the development of the child. For instance, Freud (1957) also mentioned that early childhood experiences are believed to be sexually laden, are too stressful to deal consciously and are thus reduced through repression of the psychosexual stages of development called the phallic stage of development, which has a special importance in personality development. If the child is frustrated by parents or overindulged in some way, he or she would have problems in latter personality development.

Erikson (1985) divides human personality development into eight stages of development from infancy to adulthood. Erikson's theory closely ties personality growth with parental and societal values. During the fifth developmental stage, that is the stage of sense of identity versus role confusion (ages 12-17 years) children undergo rapid physical development and they become adolescents and this is the stage during which children are trying to establish their own standards and search for their identity (Erikson, 1985). If close persons give them opportunity to experiment and to gain experience, they will be successful with their adjustment and have no problems. However, if they do not get a chance to develop their identity, they may be confused and do not know what to do with their future life.

On the other hand, Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed a model that includes several spheres of influence on child's development. A major tenet of this ecological theory according to Bronfenbrenner is that the environment affects children's development. The developing person is surrounded in a series of nested environments. His ecological systems theory holds that development reflects the influence of several environmental systems, and he identifies five environmental systems. These systems are micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, macro-system and chrono-system. In his five systems, Bronfenbrenner (1979) stresses the role of family in adolescent development.

In general an extensive amount of research has been done regarding parental influences on development of children and their behaviors at least since Dewey's work in the 1910s, the psychoanalytic movement in the 1920s, and behaviorists' work in child socialization research in 1950s. In this regard, one of the controversial issues before the 1960s was whether parents should be restrictive or permissive in rearing their children (Damon, 1983). Particularly, behaviorist advocated restrictive child rearing method i.e behaviorists of this era believed that desirable social behavior could be attained if the child's antisocial behaviors were punished and positive behaviors were carefully conditioned (Hetherington & Parike, 1979). However, between 1930s and 1960s psychoanalysts strongly advocated permissive attitude in which the parent was advised to be concerned with the feelings and capacities of the child by opposing the behaviorists' position of restrictive method (Damon, 1983). Additional influence toward permissive style also came from writings of humanistic psychologists such as Maslow (1970) and Rogers (1980). These people believed that if they are free to explore and develop in open and accepting environment, individuals have an innate capacity to realize their potential abilities. But the virtue of the authoritative style has been highly praised again since the middle 1960s (Hetherington & Parke, 1979).

Concomitantly, as a result of the above controversy, social and developmental psychologists have been concerned with the theoretical model of parenting styles by examining and analyzing the specific dimensions of parents' child rearing practices. The present study used the two dimensions parental demandingness and parental responsiveness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983) models to classify parents into distinct parenting styles. Parental demandingness or behavioral control refers to the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys (Baumrind, 1991). Parental responsiveness (also referred to as parental warmth or supportiveness) refers to the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands (Baumrind, 1991). Hence, authoritative style consists of both high warmth and control. The authoritarian style consists of low warmth and high control. The indulgent style consists of high warmth and low control. The neglectful or uninvolved style consists of both low warmth and low control.

The above differences in parental handling are likely to be reflected in the personality of adolescents and may contribute to the development of behavioral problem differences. As stressed by Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts and Fraleigh (1987) and Papalia and Olds (1982), children who come from parents who are neglectful, indulgent and authoritarian are repeatedly reported to show higher levels of behavioral problem than authoritative parenting style.

## **METHOD**

### **OBJECTIVE**

The main objective of the study was to examine whether adolescents' behavioral problem are different in the different types of parenting styles. Specifically the objectives of this study were to identify:

- Adolescents' behavioral problem associated with each parenting style.
- Whether there are differences in adolescents' behavioral problem among age groups.
- Whether there are differences in adolescents' behavioral problem between males and females.

### **HYPOTHESES**

1. There will be a significant difference in behavioral problem among adolescents from authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful parenting styles.
2. There will be a significant difference in behavioral problem among early, middle and late adolescent age groups.
3. There will be a significant difference in behavioral problem between male and female adolescents.

### **Sample**

The study was conducted on 854 adolescent students selected from high school students in Hawassa, Shashimane and Zeway. The reason that underpins the selection of high school level for the present study is that the students in the high school are expected to be more of

the adolescent age range. The random sampling technique was employed to select the subjects. All the students of these high schools constituted the population for the study. Twelve percent of them were randomly selected for the present investigation. By following this procedure, three sections multiplied by eleven schools were selected. From each school, around 78 adolescent students with approximately equal number of males and females were randomly drawn. Next, from the above mentioned sections, totally 854 students with equal number of males and female age ranges from 12 to 18 years, mean age being 16 years were selected.

### **Instruments**

In order to collect data on behavioral problem of adolescent students, the youth self report (YSR) was adopted from the existing measure (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). In this study, the 2001 version of YSR is used. The 2001 revision yielded the YSR in its current form of 112 problem items in a six-month time period. It is highly reliable and valid. The test-retest reliability reported 0.80, 0.89, and 0.87 for internalizing, externalizing and total problem scales of the instrument respectively. The instrument has also alpha coefficients of 0.90, 0.90, and 0.95 internal consistencies respectively (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001).

The YSR has two separate parts with their separate scales and use. The first part measures the competence of adolescents while the second part measures psychological problem of adolescents. The psychological problem measure has two subscales (the measures of emotional and behavioral problem scales). The emotional problem scale has 31 items and the behavioral problem scale also has 32 items (Achenbach and Rescorla, 2001).

To classify parental behaviors into four categories (authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, or neglectful styles) the index of parenting style was adapted from the existing measure (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg & Dornbusch, 1991). The classification is based on Baumrind's (1966) conceptual framework which was revised by Maccoby and Martin (1983). The measures or items required adolescent students to rate their parents in terms of the two dimensions of parenting styles, namely the warmth or involvement and strictness or supervision scale. The warmth or involvement subscale consisted of 10 items related to parental warmth, acceptance, and closeness to youngsters. This subscale measures the extent to which the student perceives his or her parents as loving, responsive, and involved. Lamborn et al. (1991) reported Cronbach alpha=.72 for this sub-scale. The strictness/supervision subscale consisted of nine items assessing parental monitoring and supervision of adolescent. Lamborn et al. (1991) reported cronbach alpha = .76 for this sub-scale.

### **Procedure**

The respondents were instructed to fill out the demographic information followed by parenting style inventory and the youth self report (YSR). The data were analyzed by using different statistical methods such as descriptive statistics, Independent t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and multiple mean comparison test.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on these two dimensions, four parenting styles have been identified. To identify those four parenting styles median split procedures is followed. Authoritative families (N=208) are those who scored equal or/and above the median on parental warmth and strictness, whereas authoritarian families (N=257) are those who scored below the median on parental warmth

but equal or/and above the median on strictness. Indulgent families (N=196) are those who scored equal or/and above the median on parental warmth but below the median on strictness. Whereas neglectful families (N=193) are those who scored below the median on parental warmth and strictness. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is employed to test the differences in adolescents' behavioral problem among parenting styles.

**Table 1.** Differences in Behavioral Problem of Adolescents among Parenting Styles

Sources	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	238228.966	3	79409.655	3241.606*
Within Groups	20822.458	850	24.497	
Total	259051.424	853		

**Note:**  $P < .01$

Table 1 reveals that, the differences in scores of behavioral problem of adolescents from different parenting styles are statistically significant. That means there is a significant difference in adolescents' behavioral problem with respect to parenting styles. Hypothesis 1 states that there will be significant difference in behavioral problem among adolescents from authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful parenting styles. The result therefore confirms the hypothesis. Based on the significant differences in adolescents' behavioral problem among parenting styles, further analysis is done to study specific differences, if any, between authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles, authoritative and indulgent parenting styles, authoritative and neglectful parenting styles, authoritarian and indulgent parenting styles, authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles and also indulgent and neglectful parenting styles. Tukey multiple comparison test is used to study the differences and the results are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Tukey Multiple Comparison Test for Behavioral Problem of Adolescents across Parenting Styles

Parenting style(I)	Parenting style(J)	Mean Difference (I-J)
Authoritative	Indulgent	-35.751*
Authoritative	Neglectful	-43.497*
Authoritarian	Indulgent	.578
Authoritarian	Neglectful	-7.168*
Indulgent	Neglectful	-7.746*

**Note:** \*  $P < .01$

The results in Table 2 indicate that, adolescents from authoritative parenting style scored significantly less in behavioral problem than adolescents from authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful parenting styles. That is to say, adolescents from authoritative parenting style scored significantly less in behavioral problem than adolescents from authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful parenting styles. There is no significant behavioral problem difference between adolescents from authoritarian and indulgent parenting styles. However adolescents from authoritarian parenting style are found to be significantly lower in behavioral problem than those from neglectful parenting style. With regard to indulgent versus neglectful parenting styles, there is a significant difference in terms of adolescents' behavioral problem

where adolescents from indulgent parenting style have significantly lesser behavioral problem as compared to those from neglectful parenting style.

This finding therefore is consistent with the findings (Berk, 1991; Patterson & Loeber, 1994) which reported that parents differ in the way they handle their children by loving or rejecting, by controlling or permissiveness, by involving or not involving, by punishing or non-punishing and these differences in parental handling are reflected in the personality of children and contribute to the development of their behavioral problem.

Authoritative parents present a balance between warmth and strictness, which provides children with opportunities to develop self-reliance (Papalia & Olds, 1990; Hetherington & Parke, 1979). Children from these homes are therefore made to learn to set standards, limits, and guidelines that develop toward goal setting and reducing behavioral problems. Parents who rear their children by warmth and strictness styles help their children by establishing clear and consistent rules and providing youngsters with a reasonable and predictable basis to regulate their behavior.

Authoritarian parents rely more on physical punishment to guide and correct their children. This means that the verbal give-and-take is not common in authoritarian households, because of the underlying belief of authoritarian parents that the child should accept everything the parents say without questioning and or without arguing with rules and standards established by parents. Papalia and Olds (1982) describe that a child who is punished regularly without even being told what mistakes he/she did would have difficulty of identifying what is right and what is wrong. This, they explain, may result in developing an attitude that his/her parents punish her/him out of sheer hate and not because the child had done something wrong. Berk (1991) also found that it could be possible, because these children are unable to express their anger toward their parents directly; they carry these negative feelings with them and emerge as angry, fearful individuals who take out their aggression against peers they see as weaker than themselves.

Indulgent parents give the child a high degree of freedom to act as he/she wishes. Youngsters set their own goals, rules and limits, with little or no guidance from parents. Therefore children who receive little or no parental guidance often become uncertain and anxious about whether they are doing in the right direction (Hetherington & Parike, 1986).

Neglectful parents could be explained in relation to lack of parental love and supervision. Such parents are disengaged and motivated to keep the child at a distance and focus on their own needs rather than the needs of the child. Because of this, adolescents from neglectful homes may feel that they are being ignored by their parents and this increases the child's sense of helplessness and hence the child develops behavioral problem (Hetherington & Parike, 1986).

The findings put together reveal that authoritative parenting style is associated with the least behavioral problem of adolescents, authoritarian and indulgent parenting styles stand the next in the order and the neglectful parenting style is associated with the highest behavioral problem of adolescents. Thus, in the house of authoritative parenting their children are found to be having the least behavioral problem, probably because they are given both warmth and support while being supervised strictly which could enable them to have self-confidence and feelings of security while having direction and focus in their activities. Lack of either of these, that is, warmth or supervision in parenting proved inferior and their results show children from authoritarian and indulgent parenting are found to have more behavioral

problem. Interestingly, an adolescent from these parents that is, either authoritarian or indulgent did not differ significantly showing that either warmth without control or only control without warmth has almost an equal impact on the adolescents' behavioral problem. Thus, purely giving warmth or purely exercising control on children is incomplete as the child feels uncertain with only warmth and no direction or feels totally frustrated with only control and no warmth as his/her self-expression is curtailed. Neglectful parenting is even more debilitating as the child lacks both control and warmth from parents which is likely to leave him/her with no sense of purpose and direction and with feelings of inadequacy and rejection.

**Table 3.** Differences in Behavioral Problem of Adolescents among Age Groups

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	14627.390	2	7313.695	25.464*
Within Groups	244424.034	851	287.220	
Total	259051.424	853		

**Note:** \*P<.01

The results of one-way ANOVA (Table 3) reveal that, the differences between scores of adolescents' behavioral problem among age groups are statistically significant. Hypothesis 2 states that there will be significant difference in behavioral problem among early, middle and late adolescent age groups. The result therefore confirms the hypothesis. Therefore, based on the significant differences in adolescents' behavioral problem among age groups, further analysis is done to study specific differences, if any, between two groups, such as early and middle, middle and late, early and late. For this reason, in order to study the differences Tukey multiple comparison test is used and the results are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Tukey Multiple Comparison Test for Behavioral Problem across Age groups

Age group ( I)	Age group (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)
Early adolescent	Middle adolescent	4.622(*)
Early adolescent	Late adolescent	10.462(*)
Middle adolescent	Late adolescent	5.839(*)

**Note:** \*P<.01

Table 4 unveils that, the early adolescent group has significantly higher mean score in behavioral problem than the middle adolescent age group and also the early adolescent group has significantly higher mean score in behavioral problem than late adolescent groups. Middle adolescent age group has significantly higher behavioral problem score than the late adolescent age group. Early adolescence is a period in which young children are confronted with a variety of rapid physical and emotional changes. They are maturing and are changing from primary to secondary schools. Hence, it may be inferred that the low level of behavioral problem among older adolescents is that as their age increases, societal expectations would also increase and hence there could be increase in the development of responsibility behaviors. As a result, older children are more likely to assume responsibility behavior and decrease the probability of involving in behavioral problems.

Difference in behavioral problem between male and female adolescents is studied by independent t-test and the results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Differences in Behavioral Problem between Male and Female Adolescents

t-test for Equality of Means		
t	df	Sig.
.754	852	.451

Examination of behavioral problem score as given in Table 5 demonstrates no significant behavioral problem differences between male and female adolescents. Hypothesis 3 states that there will be significant differences in behavioral problem between male and female adolescents. The results therefore fail to confirm the hypothesis. It could be because both boys and girls belong to transitional phase namely adolescence which is marked by rapid physical changes, concomitant emotional problems, striving for self-identity, indecisiveness and role ambiguity because they are neither treated as children nor as adults. Therefore behavioral problems are likely to arise for both the groups as they are placed in a state of emotional and psychological vulnerability.

## CONCLUSION

The investigation highlights that there is a significant difference in behavioral problem of adolescents from different parenting styles i.e. behavioral problem of adolescents from authoritative parenting style is significantly lesser than behavioral problem of adolescents from authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful parenting styles but there is no significant difference in behavioral problem of adolescents from authoritarian and indulgent parenting styles. Behavioral problem of adolescents from authoritarian or indulgent parenting style are significantly lesser than behavioral problem of adolescents from neglectful parenting style. In addition to parenting styles there is also a significant difference in behavioral problem of adolescents across age groups i.e. the early adolescent age group has significantly higher behavioral problem than the middle and late adolescent age group where as middle adolescent age group has significantly higher behavioral problem than the late adolescent age group. Male and female adolescents did not differ in their behavioral problem.

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