

Family Structure as a Determinant of Parenting Style During Adolescence.

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Abstract

Family structure plays an important role in shaping parenting practices and the overall development of adolescents. The present study focuses on family structure as determinant of parenting style during adolescence, with particular emphasis on differences between nuclear and joint families. The structure of family affects parental roles, decision making, communication patterns, emotional support and the use of discipline. In joint families, the presence of grandparents and other relatives may provide additional support and influence parenting practices. The result revealed no significant gender difference in parenting styles in nuclear family but in joint family, gender difference existed in democratic parenting approach.

Keywords: *Adolescent Girls. Adolescent Boys, Parenting Style, Nuclear Family, Joint Family.*

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical development period characterised by significant physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. It is during this stage an individual strives for autonomy, develop their identities, increased influence of peers, schools and digital media that helps in shaping their attitude and behaviour. Among various familiar factors influencing adolescence development, parenting style plays a particularly important role in determining psychological well-being, academic achievement, emotional maturity and social competence. Parenting style refers to the pattern of attitude, behaviours and practices that parents use in raising their children. Baumrind (1967, 1971) identified three primary parenting styles – authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. Maccoby and Martin (1983) later expanded and included the uninvolved or neglectful parenting. Authoritative parenting is characterised by warmth, responsiveness and appropriate control which results into positive development outcomes. On the other hand, authoritarian parenting focuses on strict discipline and obedience, permissive parenting involves high warmth but low control. Neglectful parenting is marked by low responsiveness and low involvement. Various factors like culture, socio-economic status, parental education, family size and structure influence the parenting styles. In Indian context, there are two family structure types i.e. Nuclear and Joint. In nuclear families, parents often bear sole responsibility for child rearing and decision making. This may result in greater parental attention and autonomy in parenting decisions

but might also create challenges due to increased work-related stress and limited support system. In contrast to joint families, where there is a broader support network having multiple caregivers may contribute to the transmission of traditional values, shared parenting practices and collective decision-making regarding child rearing.

Research suggests that family structure affects family behaviour and adolescent development. Those raised in supportive family environment tend to demonstrate higher self-esteem, better emotional regulation, stronger social skills and improved academic performance. Family environment characterised by conflicts, inconsistencies or lack of parental involvement results in individuals' behavioural problems, emotional difficulties and poor adjustment skills. While both family type offer unique advantages and challenges, limited research has systematically examined how these family structure influence parenting style during adolescence. The present study seeks to explore the influence of family structure on parenting style with the aim to contribute to the growing body of literature on family dynamics and adolescence development. The findings will also provide valuable insights for parents, educators, counsellors and policy makers to foster supportive family environment in order to promote positive developmental outcomes.

Objectives

To compare parenting style on the basis of gender and family structure.

To compare parenting styles of adolescence belonging to nuclear and joint family.

Methodology

The overall sample size for the present study was 240 in which 120 respondents belonged to nuclear and joint family type respectively. Further they were classified into 60 boys and 60 girls. The respondents were selected using simple random sampling without replacement method from private co-ed schools of Muzaffarpur Bihar.

Tools

For data collection standardized tool having high reliability and validity was selected. Parenting style scale by Madhu Gupta and Dimple Mehtani was used to assess parenting style of the respondents. This scale consists of 44 items measuring four types of parenting style i.e., Democratic, Autocratic, Permissive and Uninvolved parenting style. It is a self-reporting Five-Point Scale and the items are responded by the students in any one choice among the five options a) always b) often c) sometimes d) rarely and e) never.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Mean Difference in Domains of Parenting Style of Adolescent boys and girls belonging to Nuclear and Joint Family

	Parenting Style	Boys		Girls		t- value	Degree of freedom	Sig level
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D			
Nuclear Family	Democratic	28.05	5.679	26.08	7.464	1.624	118	.107
	Autocratic	33.48	7.017	33.72	7.052	0.182	118	.856
	Permissive	19.53	6.363	19.00	5.396	0.495	118	.621
	Uninvolved	11.47	6.526	11.45	6.400	0.014	118	.989
Joint Family	Democratic	37.22	5.292	34.72	6.394	2.333	118	.021
	Autocratic	26.13	6.912	25.72	5.247	0.372	118	.711
	Permissive	19.82	6.604	21.00	6.535	0.987	118	.326
	Uninvolved	10.62	6.126	10.33	6.251	0.251	118	.802

Sig <0.05 (Significance Level less than 0.05 indicates a significant difference in data which means rejection of null hypothesis).

The above table 1 reveals that there is no significant difference in the parenting styles of boys and girls belonging to nuclear family system as all the obtained p-values were greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that boys and girls perceive similar level of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved parenting within nuclear family setting. The finding is supported by Endendijk et al., (2016) where meta-analysis of 126 studies involving 15,034 families showed very negligible differences in the way they parent boys and girls. Dutt & Jahan (2019) conducted a study in Delhi NCR reporting no significant gender difference in parenting style. They reported that parents in metropolitan Indian families use similar parenting practices for both boys and girls. In contrary to the above finding, Shah and Shah (2024) reported significant gender difference in parenting style among adolescents. Results indicated significant differences in all parenting styles: democratic parenting style was more prevalent among parents of female adolescents, while autocratic, permissive and uninvolved parenting styles were more common among parents of male adolescents. These findings highlight gender-specific variations in parenting practices and underscore their implications for adolescent development.

Similar finding was observed in joint family system where there was no significant difference in different parenting styles except in democratic parenting style domain.

Table 2: Mean Difference in Parenting Style of Nuclear and Joint Family

Parenting Style	Nuclear		Joint		t- value	Degree of freedom	Sig level
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D			
Democratic	27.07	6.677	35.97	5.977	10.879	238	.000
Autocratic	33.60	7.006	25.93	6.114	9.042	238	.000
Permissive	19.27	5.881	20.41	6.569	1.418	238	.157
Uninvolved	11.46	6.436	10.48	6.164	1.209	238	.228

Sig <0.05 (Significance Level less than 0.05 indicates a significant difference in data which means rejection of null hypothesis).

Table 2 represents the comparison of parenting style among adolescents belonging to nuclear and joint families. The results indicated significant difference between nuclear and joint families in democratic and autocratic parenting style, whereas no significant difference were found in permissive and uninvolved parenting styles. In democratic approach of parenting, adolescents from joint families obtained a considerably higher mean ($M = 35.97$, $SD = 5.977$) than adolescents from nuclear families ($M = 27.07$, $SD = 6.677$). the obtained t -value of 10.879 was statistically significant at $p < .001$. This indicates that teenagers belonging to joint families perceived a greater use of democratic parenting practices. The finding is supported by Akurathi (2022) who reported difference in perceived parenting practices in nuclear and joint family structure and emphasized on the difference in the social and support resources available to adolescents.

With regard to autocratic parenting, adolescents from nuclear families had higher mean ($M = 33.60$, $SD = 7.006$) compared to those from joint families ($M = 25.93$, $SD = 6.114$). The t -value of 9.036 was statistically significant at $p < .001$. In nuclear family parenting responsibility is primarily on the parents thereby exercising direct control over academic performance, discipline, daily routines and decision making.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that family structure has a significant influence on democratic and autocratic parenting styles, whereas it does not significantly influence permissive and uninvolved parenting styles. Parents of joint families are highly democratic while those of nuclear family are autocratic in parenting approach. Gender differences were observed only in democratic parenting style with boys reporting higher level of democratic parenting than girls. Thus, family structure appears to be a stronger factor associated with difference in parenting style than gender.

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