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Influence of gender on adolescent's interpersonal bonding with their parents, siblings and peers

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Abstract

Closely knit bonds or relationships are called interpersonal relationships. Intimacy in a relationship decides upon the interpersonal bonding between two or more individuals which is based upon the level of solidarity and love shared between them. Adolescence is an age where an individual requires most efforts and nurturing abilities to maintain interpersonal bonding within and outside the family. Therefore, in the present study, the level of interpersonal bonding among the adolescent boys and girls was assessed in the selected dimensions. The total sample consisted of 240 adolescents, out of which 120 were boys and 120 were girls. The scale on 'Interpersonal Bonding' developed by the investigator was used for this study. Z-Test for difference between two means was administered and a significant difference was found in the levels of interpersonal bonding among the adolescent boys and girls with their peers. No significant difference was observed among the adolescents regarding interpersonal bonding with their parents and siblings.

Keywords: Interpersonal bonding, adolescents, boys and girls, parents, siblings, peers

1. Introduction

The study of adolescence has always been an interesting subject to explore. Adolescence is the vulnerable age group in the society and thus growing up as a teenager is usually pretty stressful and exciting at the same time. It is because socially, the adolescents are no longer a child, yet the adult. In fact, it is considered that adolescent is a time of discovery; a time to try new things whether it is about self-identity, establishing family relationships or about choosing peers (Prinstein and Dodge 2008) ^[5].

The closest relationships are most often found within a family or over a group of friends. Interpersonal relationships require the most effort to nurture and maintain. These are also the relationships that give you the most joy and satisfaction. Interpersonal relationship is an association between two or more people that may range from fleeting to enduring.

Adolescence is the age when social relations come in the central dimension of psychosocial development. It is crucial in development of self esteem and self competence in adolescents. Many of the researches have shown clear link between social interaction and longevity, social relationship and well being (Nef, 2012) ^[3].

Interpersonal Bonding is mainly associated with the interpersonal communication that takes places between two or more individuals. This type of communication can occur in both a one-on-one and a group setting. It is a strong, deep and close association between two or more people.

Development of a strong interpersonal bonding within and outside the family is of utmost importance during the adolescence stage of life. It lays the foundation of the relationships and social support an individual is going to achieve during the later years of life. Thus, the area holds very much significance regarding establishing and maintaining strong family and social relationships among the adolescents. Though some of the Indian researchers have studied about the interpersonal bonding of adolescents involving their families, very few studies are available on siblings and peer relationships and on influence of gender on this aspect. Thus the present study was a small attempt to fill the potholes in this specific field and envisaged on the following objective:

- To assess and compare the level of interpersonal bonding among the adolescent boys and girls.

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2. Research Methods

The present study was conducted in Udaipur, a city of Rajasthan. The total sample consisted of 240 adolescents, out of which 120 were boys and 120 were girls, residing in nuclear families.

The scale on 'Interpersonal Bonding' developed by the investigator was used to assess the level of interpersonal bonding in selected dimensions among the adolescent boys and girls. In the present study, interpersonal bonding was mainly associated with the type of interactions adolescents share with their parents, siblings and peers and involves four major aspects i.e. Cohesiveness, Self Disclosure, Flexibility and Decision Making. The scale consists of close-ended questions, seeking responses on finding out the level of

interpersonal bonding of adolescents on a three point scale. Z-test for difference between two means was administered to compare the means of two populations i.e. to compare the level of interpersonal bonding among the adolescents on the basis of gender.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Overall distribution of the adolescents for the levels of interpersonal bonding on the basis on gender

Interpersonal bonding of the adolescents on the basis on gender was studied with their parents, siblings and peers. Table No. 1 provides the aspect wise percentage distribution of adolescent boys and girls regarding their interpersonal bonding with the parents, siblings and peers.

Table 1: Percentage distribution for the level of interpersonal bonding among the adolescent boys and girls, n=240

Interaction Pattern With	BOYS (n ₁ =120)						GIRLS (n ₂ =120)					
	Low		Moderate		High		Low		Moderate		High	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Parents	37	30.8	48	40	35	29.2	28	23.3	44	36.6	48	40
Siblings	23	19.2	44	36.6	53	44.2	24	20	50	41.6	46	38.3
Peers	10	8.4	44	36.6	66	55	26	21.6	41	34.2	53	44.2

As per the data given in Table No.1 regarding interpersonal bonding with the parents, 29.2 percent boys and 40 percent girls experienced high, 40 percent boys and 36.6 percent girls scored moderate and 30.8 percent boys and 23.3 percent girls scored low. Girls scored higher than boys in this category. Nucci *et al.* (2014) [4] reported in a study that adolescents have more information to share with parents, but also possibly more to hide if they fear that parents will disapprove and seek to curtail their peer interactions. On the other hand, interactions and relationships with peers expand during this period.

Regarding interpersonal bonding with the siblings, 44.2 percent of the boys and 38.3 percent girls scored higher and 19.2 percent boys and 20 percent girls scored lower in this category. The remaining respondents were found to have moderate level of interpersonal bonding with the siblings.

With the peers, majority of the respondents (55% boys and 44.2% girls) scored high, 36.6 percent boys and 34.2 percent girls scored moderately and 8.4 percent boys and 21.6 percent girls scored low in this area. Girls were found to have low

level of interpersonal bonding with the peers as compared to boys.

The results revealed that among the adolescent boys and girls very low gender differences were observed in interpersonal bonding with siblings, slight differences with the parents whereas, higher differences were shown in interpersonal bonding with peers on the basis of gender. Barker and Ricardo (2005) [1] stated that peer networks often become an important socializing force for boys during adolescence.

3.2 Comparison of interpersonal bonding of the adolescents on the basis on gender

The interpersonal bonding of the adolescents was assessed on the basis of gender to find out whether there is any difference among them regarding the level of selected dimensions. For this purpose, Z-test for difference between two means was used.

Table No. 2 depicts the values of the Z-test calculated for the interpersonal bonding of the adolescents on the basis of gender with their parents, siblings and peers.

Table 2: Gender-wise comparison of the interpersonal bonding of the adolescents, n=240

S. No.	Interpersonal Bonding With	Boys (n ₁ =120)		Girls (n ₂ =120)		Z-values
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
1.	Parents	36.28	10.37	38.7	9.99	1.4
2.	Siblings	39.12	9.72	37.85	9.69	1.02
3.	Peers	39.35	8.1	36.32	9.93	2.22*

*Significant at 5 percent level of significance

The comparison of interpersonal bonding of the adolescent boys and girls is presented in Table No. 2. In 'interpersonal bonding', gender-wise significant differences were observed with peers. The level of interpersonal bonding with parents was found to be higher among the adolescent girls whereas boys scored higher in interpersonal bonding with the siblings and peers. The results revealed that girls are more attached to their parents regarding establishment of interpersonal relationships because the values, suggestions and guidance given by the parents are of very much significance to them. Boys on the other hand indicated higher level of interpersonal bonding with their siblings and peers because they believe in more independent and restriction free environment which is

not always available with the parents. On comparing the calculated Z-values of parents (1.4) and siblings (1.02) with the tabulated Z-values, no significant differences were observed as the calculated Z-values were found to be smaller than the tabulated values of 'Z' at 5 percent level of significance whereas with peers significant differences were observed as the calculated Z-value (2.22) was found to be higher than the tabulated values of 'Z' at 5 percent level of significance.

Differences in interpersonal bonding among the adolescent boys and girls in relation to their peers were elaborated by Frosted and Pijl (2016) [2] in a study done among Norwegian students aged 14-15 (grade 10). The results indicated

significant gender differences in their interpersonal relations, social position and friendship criteria. However, boys and girls frequently have the same preferences in peer relationships, but to a different degree. The variance within the gender groups may have exceeded the variance between them.

4. Conclusion

The results of the present study indicate no significant differences regarding interpersonal bonding among the adolescents with their parents and siblings across the gender which may be due to the similar family environment and opportunities received by both the adolescent boys and girls. Now a days, most of the families are moving towards practicing androgyny and do not discriminate their children to communicate and bond with people in a different manner just because they belong to different sexes. They are moving beyond the traditional attitudes and behaviors and breaking the stereotypes. On the other hand, gender based differences were observed with peers where the boys scored higher which may be because boys stay in large peer groups and are more open in their relationship with peers. They are more flexible and believe in freedom of expression regarding sharing their views which improves their interpersonal bonding with the peers. Girls on the other hand prefer to stay in smaller peer groups and are more manipulative and less expressive in their interpersonal bonding with peers as compared to the male counterpart.

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