

Perceived Father Involvement and Life Satisfaction among Adolescents a Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract: In India, there are only scant literatures that look into this connection between father's involvement and mental wellbeing of adolescents particularly from the point of view of adolescents. The current study examined the relationship between adolescent's perspective on the level of their father's involvement and life satisfaction, an indicator of psychological adjustment. Participants included 100 students in the age group of 12-18 years studying in two public schools in Kumily, a village in Kerala State. Standardized questionnaires were used to measure the level of perceived father involvement and life satisfaction among participants. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived father involvement and life satisfaction. The strong association found between these two aspects call for more longitudinal studies to be conducted to establish the causal relationship and measures to promote the involvement of fathers should become a priority when adolescent wellbeing is considered.

Key words: Father involvement, life satisfaction, adolescents, literatures, cross sectional

INTRODUCTION

An overwhelming number of studies have shown that parenting practices and roles have direct impact in the psychological adjustment and wellbeing of adolescents. Parent-child relationship being the most prominent source of stimulus in the initial years have a major role in building adolescent's self-concept which often reflects their mental wellbeing and in the development of personal, social and academic success (Saraff and Srivastava, 2008). Earlier times, fathers were being looked at as moral overseers, providers, protectors who distanced themselves of the parental responsibility in terms of maintaining a responsive and affective relationship with children. Today, fathers are comparatively more involved than before where industrialization, urbanization, increasing number of nuclear families, more women's engagement in paid work, advancement in communication technologies leading to increased global cultural influence, etc., have been some of the major landmarks that made father's engagement more possible (Sriram, 2011).

In terms of behavioral outcomes in children, father involvement has been linked with increased pro-social behavior and decreased delinquency (Datta, 2007). A large population-based study in Britain has found that father involvement to be negatively correlated with antisocial behavior. Among adolescents, father's

strictness and acceptance meant fewer externalizing and internalizing behavioral problems while inconsistent parenting is associated with occurrences of externalizing behavioral problems.

The present correlation study attempts to explore the possible link between perceived father involvement and life satisfaction among adolescent students in a rural setting in Kerala. It study is cross-sectional in design as it tries to analyze data collected at a specific point of time. Based on the ecological model where father involvement is conceptualized to be influenced by various contextual factors, information on socioeconomic status, mother involvement, family structure, child's sex, age and parent's education were also considered. It was hypothesized that father involvement will be positively correlated with father's education, socioeconomic status and mother involvement while negatively related to adolescent's age. Father's involvement was assumed to be higher among male adolescents in comparison with female adolescent children.

The current study examined the links between perceived father involvement and life satisfaction among adolescents. The study was cross-sectional in design where the data obtained correspond to respondent's current state of being. Also, the tools used were standardized and the data collected were quantitative in nature. Some of the major findings are noted down.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants: The 100 adolescents aged 12-18 years were randomly selected from two high schools in Kumily. Written consent from the school Principals and oral consent from the students were obtained before conducting the study. The response rate of the students was 100%.

Procedure: Self-reported measures of standard questionnaires were used and a brief list on socio-demographic features was included. A teacher from each school confirmed that participant students possessed the level of English comprehension to provide accurate responses to the questionnaire. Nevertheless, translation for questions in the local language was dictated. In order to ensure inclusion of students of different ages within the range of 12-18 years, students taken from classes 7-12 were proportionate in number hence the sampling method employed was stratified random sampling. All students were gathered in a single room where instructions on filling out questionnaire were given and it took about 30 mins for the students to complete the questionnaire.

Tools: Perceived father involvement (Center for Human Resource Research, 2002) and life satisfaction of adolescents (Huebner, 1994).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sample demographics: The mean age of adolescents was 15 years (SD = 1.77). Those belonging to early adolescent group were 46 while 54 were late adolescents. Of the 100 samples, 54 were female and 46 adolescents were male. Almost half of the samples (49%) were first children in their families and a comparable proportion of the adolescents (53%) were from families with 2 children followed by 39% of them belonging to families with 3 children. A large majority of the adolescents (93%) categorized their families as middle income class. Mean age of fathers was 47.08 (SD = 5.13) and mother's average age was 41.67 (SD = 4.45). On average fathers completed 11.78 years (SD = 2.2) of education and mothers 12.29 years (SD = 2.34). The 94 the adolescents had both their parents living with them while 6 of them had fathers who were working away from home and hence were staying with only their mothers at home.

Major findings: The perceived FI was found to be positively correlated with the overall life satisfaction as

Table 1: Correlation tests between perceived FI and life satisfaction scores

MSLSS scales	Perceived father involvement	
	Spearman's correlation coefficient (r_s)	Significance (1-tailed)
Overall life satisfaction	0.41	0.000**
Satisfaction with family	0.31	0.001**
Satisfaction with friends	0.22	0.013*
Satisfaction with school	0.28	0.002**
Satisfaction with living environment	0.32	0.001**
Satisfaction with self	0.17	0.051

*Correlation is statistically significant at 0.01 level of significance;

**Correlation is statistically significant at 0.001 level

well as four domains of family, friends, school and living environment. The correlation scores were statistically significant at the level of 0.01 significance (Table 1).

The correlation tests confirms that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived father involvement and overall life satisfaction among adolescents ($p < 0.001$). The main finding pertaining to perceived father involvement and life satisfaction among adolescents showed that there is a positive, statistically significant correlation between these two factors. Furthermore, perceived father involvement was found to be positively correlated with four out of five domains of life satisfaction such as family, friends, school and living environment. The only other variable that had statistically significant association with perceived father involvement was perceived mother involvement. Though not statistically significant, some of the noteworthy associations observed were the higher perceived father involvement among female adolescents than male adolescents and higher perceived father involvement among children of younger fathers. These two results could suggest that fathers are involving equally among both male and female adolescent children and that younger fathers are contributing more as parents, indicating a trend towards more engagement from fathers in parenting.

The findings in this study should also be seen in the light of its limitations. Since, the study is cross-sectional in design it can only provide the strength of correlation between variables studied. Causality or the effect of perceived father involvement on life satisfaction cannot be ascertained. Also, since the data was non-parametric, the effect of other possible confounding factors could not be negated. The above findings support the association between how adolescents perceive their father's involvement and their life satisfaction levels. This further necessitates collective actions to promote involvement of fathers in the lives of adolescents. All

major factors that influence paternal involvement should be looked into to make requisite amendments so as to facilitate conditions that make father's engagement in adolescent's lives more feasible.

CONCLUSION

The study was able to illustrate the link perceived father involvement and life satisfaction among adolescents where a statistically significant positive association was observed. With very limited research devoted in this area, the results and implications of this study might prove to be a substantial addition to literature concerned with family and child wellbeing.

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