

Parental Attachment and Proactive Attitude among Adolescents

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Abstract - The purpose of the research was to study the relationship between parental attachment and proactive attitude among adolescents. For this purpose, a sample of 600 adolescents was selected through stratified random sampling technique from different schools and colleges of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. The adolescents' ages were grouped into three categories; students belonging to early adolescence (13-14 years) students belonging to middle adolescence (15 to 17 years) and students belonging to late adolescence (18 to 19 years). A short demographic sheet for the adolescents was used to get information on their ages, gender and institutional affiliation. The study consisted of two phases. Phase I dealt with determining the psychometric properties of the scales and pilot study and Phase II consisted on the main study. Statistical analyses revealed positive correlation between parental attachment and proactive attitude at moderate level among adolescents. On comparing the gender based differences on the proactive attitude, female adolescent's scores were

comparatively higher on Proactive Attitude Scale as compared to the male adolescents. Results further revealed that adolescents belonging to late adolescence group showed more proactive attitude as compared to the adolescents categorized as early and middle adolescence group. Moreover, adolescents belonging to upper socio-economic status were more proactive than adolescents belonging to middle and low socio-economic status.

Keywords- parental attachment, proactive attitude

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a developmental period when multiple transitions occur. Substantial changes occur in physical, hormonal, familial, relational, educational domains and social behavior within a relatively short period of time. Most notable changes occur in the nature of social interactions. There is a popular stereotype that adolescence is a stage in life that consists of increased conflict, and defiance to traditional social values and standards (Caissy, 1994; Hall, 1916). However, this stereotype applies to a small percentage of early adolescents. Many theoretical frameworks lay stress on parents-child interaction in the process of socialization. These include psychoanalytic theory, social learning theory, and social cognition theory. Many researchers link socialization process with parent-child relationship (Bowlby, 1969/1982; Ainsworth, 1989; Eisenberg & Valiente, 2002; Grusec, Davidov, & Lundell, 2002) and family processes in the development of proactive attitude (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998). Proactive behavior refers to “intrinsically motivated voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals” (Eisenberg and Mussen 1989, 3). This voluntary act that is intended to benefit another person includes sharing, helping, comforting, rescuing, and cooperation.

Proactive attitude is a personality characteristic which has various facets such as resourcefulness, responsibility, values, and vision. It has implications for motivation and action. The proactive person takes

responsibility for his or her own growth and possesses a potential to improve oneself and one's environment. The socialization of proactive development progresses through the dynamic interaction between children and their parents. It has also been found that attachment between parent and child harnesses an environment where values are better socialized and accepted (Eisenberg & Valiente 2002), thus, promoting proactive attitudes and positive outcomes. There are links between parental affection and children's proactive characteristics (e.g., Clark & Ladd, 2000), although exceptions also exist (e.g., Davidov & Grusec, 2006). Contrarily, adolescents' perceptions of their parents' close involvement in their lives has predicted higher rates of engaging in voluntary community work in early adulthood (Zaff et al., 2003).

Attachment theorists state that secure attachment relationships supporting proactive development are through internal working models of attachment relationships (Mikulciner & Shaver, 2005). Maternal openness and encouragement of emotional expressivity have been associated with proactive attitude (e.g., Eisenberg, Fabes, & Murphy, 1996; Eisenberg, Fabes, Schaller, Carlo, & Miller, 1991; Eisenberg et al., 1992; Garner, 2003). Authoritative parenting support proactive attitude by encouraging children to be more caring for others (Hastings et al., 2000). Likewise, maternal authoritative style predicted more proactive attitude responses for girls (Hastings, Rubin, & DeRose, 2005).

Other studies indicate that for girls who had been more inhibited, early maternal authoritarianism predicted more proactive responses (Hastings, Rubin, Mielcarek, & Kennedy, 2002). Maternal sensitivity to children facilitates proactive development in children (Robinson, Zahn-Waxler, and colleagues, 1994). Researchers have not focused as much attention on the roles of fathers in the proactive development of children as compared to mothers, although some studies do suggest that paternal influences may contribute to children's proactive development (e.g., Dekovic & Janssens, 1992; Janssens & Gerris, 1992; Sturgess, Dunn, & Davies, 2001). There are links between age, gender, socialization, and proactive attitude among adolescents. Researches indicate that proactive and moral behavior increases with age (Eisenberg, 1986; Kohlberg, 1976; Piaget, 1932/1965). Hence, it should be assumed that adolescents would show more proactive

behavior than they did when they were children. However there is stability in elementary school-age children's proactive attitude (Zhou et al., 2002), specially in adolescents' proactive attitude toward peers (Wentzel, Barry, & Caldwell, 2004). Gender is one of the most consistent correlates of proactive attitude. Studies confirm the early emergence of sex differences favoring girls in the expression of nurturing attitudes toward others in need (Zahn-Waxler, Robinson et al., 1992) and socialization experiences (Robinson, Zahn-Waxler, & Emde, 1994). However, observational techniques as compared to questionnaire reports provide less consistent evidence regarding sex differences in proactive characteristics (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Grusec, Goodnow, & Cohen, 1996; Hastings, Rubin, & DeRose, 2005; Zhou et al., 2002).

Studies have also shown that children from poor families having lower income or job status, are less proactive than children from more privileged homes (e.g., Haapasalo, Tremblay, Boulerice, & Vitaron, 2000; Lichter, Shanahan, & Gardner, 2002). These effects may be due to the non-availability of proactive role models, stressful experiences that increase children's self-focused concern, or socioeconomic status differences in parental socialization. Thus, the links between lower socioeconomic status and lower proactive development may be mediated by maladaptive parental socialization.

Several researchers have suggested that children and adolescents in more collectivist cultures are more empathic, altruistic and cooperative than children in individualist cultures (e.g., Knight et al., 1982; Zaff et al., 2003) however disconfirming results have also been reported (for e.g; Carlo, Koller, Eisenberg, Da Silva, & Frohlich, 1996; Pilgrim & Rueda-Riedle, 2002). Cultural differences in parental socialization in the development of proactive tendencies may be found (Knight et al., 1982; Whiting & Whiting, 1975).

Securely attached children are more proactive specially when their mothers and fathers are more authoritative than authoritarian in their style; make use of gentler control techniques; use reasoning and provide explanations; are sensitive to their children's needs; and support their children's experience and regulation of emotions. Children are more proactive when they come from secure homes; have friendly relationships with their siblings; and have good experience.

The concept of proactive attitude is extremely important in furthering research in a number of fields, including education, social work, criminal justice and law. For this purpose its psychological foundations and theoretical understanding is needed to draw practical implications.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was designed to achieve the following objectives: (1) determine proactive attitude among adolescents; (2) find out the relationship of proactive attitude of adolescents and their attachment with fathers; (3) find out the relationship of proactive attitude of adolescents and their attachment with mothers; (4) analyze the relationship between parental attachment and proactive attitude among adolescents; and, (5) find out the effects of socioeconomic status on the development of proactive attitude among adolescents.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Sample

A total of 600 adolescents (male $n = 300$ and female $n = 300$) were taken from different schools and colleges of Rawalpindi and Islamabad (Pakistan) as participants of this study. Three categories of educational institutions were taken (Urdu medium institutions, Government institutions and English medium private institutions). Simple random sampling was chosen for selecting the sample. The adolescents' ages were grouped into three categories; adolescents belonging to early adolescence (13-14 years) adolescents belonging to middle adolescence (15 to 17 years) and adolescents belonging to late adolescence (18 to 19 years). The sample was further divide to three socioeconomic classes i.e. upper, middle and lower on the basis of demographic data family income.

Instruments

The following scales were used for the study:

1. Subscales (Mother Attachment Scale and Father Attachment Scale) of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987)

- 2. Proactive Attitude Scale (Schwarzer, 1999)
- 3. A demographic sheet for adolescents (It required information regarding adolescents' age, gender and institutional affiliation)

Table 1. Alpha reliability coefficients of the mother attachment scale, father attachment scale and proactive attitude

Scales	No. of Items	Alpha Reliability Coefficients
Mother Attachment Scale	8	.87
Father Attachment Scale	8	.87
Proactive Attitude Scale	8	.55

Table 1 indicates the Alpha reliability coefficients of Mother Attachment Scale, Father Attachment Scale and Proactive Attitude Scale. The Alpha reliability coefficient of Mother Attachment Scale, Father Attachment Scale and Proactive Attitude Scale is .87, .87 and .55 respectively which is quite satisfactory.

Table 2. Mean scores and SD of adolescents on mother attachment scale, father attachment scale and proactive attitude scale (N=600)

Scales	Mean	SD
Mother Attachment Scale	99.8	13.6
Father Attachment Scale	98.5	13.9
Proactive Attitude Scale	22.7	3.81

Table 2 indicates the mean scores and standard deviation of adolescents on Mother Attachment Scale, Father Attachment Scale and Proactive Attitude Scale which are M = 99.8 and SD = 13.6; M =98.5 and SD = 13.9; and M =22.7 and SD =3.81 respectively.

Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987)

It was originally developed to measure emotional attachment in adolescents. Its purpose is to measure the positive and negative affective and cognitive dimensions of adolescents' relationships with their parents and peers. Specifically, the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) taps into how well these figures serve as sources of psychological security.

Based on Bowlby's theory of attachment (1969), three broad dimensions are assessed: degree of mutual trust; quality of communication; and extent of alienation and anger. Two subscales of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment were utilized for this study. The first subscale measures attachment to mother, or the degree to which the respondent feels he has a close and positive relationship with his mother. The second subscale measures attachment to father, or the degree to which the respondent feels he has a close and positive relationship with his father. IPPA is a self-report measure. It consists of 25 items for the mother, 25 items for the father, and 25 items for the peer to which participants respond using a five-point Likert scale (in which 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, and 5 = Always).

The IPPA is scored by reverse scoring the negatively phrased items and then summing the response values in each section. The items to be reversed scored for Mother Attachment Scale are 3, 6, 8, 9, 8, 11, 14, 17, 18, and 23. The items to be reversed scored for Father Attachment Scale are 3, 6, 8, 9, 8, 11, 14, 17, 18, and 23. High score on the scale is indicative of secure attachment. Armsden and Greenberg (1987) reported Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients of 0.87 for Mother Attachment and 0.89 for Father Attachment. Armsden and Greenberg (1987) reported three week test retest reliability coefficients for the original version of the IPPA-R of 0.93 for Parent attachment (mothers and fathers rated together). As far as validity of IPPA is concerned, Armsden and Greenberg (1987) reported that parent attachment scores were significantly related to indicators of family environment, family and social self-concepts, and the tendency to seek the support of parents when needed.

Proactive Attitude Scale (Schwarzer, 1999)

The Proactive Attitude Scale was employed for the current study. It is a self-report measure intended to assess the individual's tendency to perform proactive attitudes. It is a parsimonious self-administered scale consisting of 8 items. It is designed for the general adult population (including adolescents). The administration of the scale requires approximately 4 minutes. Responses are made on a 4 point scale (1= not at all true; 2 = barely true; 3 = moderately true; 4 = exactly true). A composite score is yielded by summing up the responses of all 8 items. A high score on the scale indicates that a person has high proactive attitude and a low score on this scale indicates a person's low proactive attitude.

Procedure

After determining the sample and instruments for the current study, informed consent forms were distributed to the students and a pilot study was conducted. Boys and girls were both asked to complete Mother Attachment Scale, Father Attachment Scale, and Proactive Attitude Scale. Additionally, they were asked to complete a demographic sheet indicating their age, gender and institutional affiliation. The data collected for the pilot study provided a sound understanding of the variables and showed the direction of the study. However, for the main study the sample size was increased. The purpose of the study as well as the testing procedure was conveyed to the subjects. The subjects were ensured about the confidentiality and security of data. Hence the data was collected for the main study. The research goals were accomplished by measuring and analyzing parental attachment and proactive attitude among adolescents.

Data Analysis Procedures

In this study, analyses were performed using the SPSS Version 13.0. Quantitative research methods were used to analyze the collected data. Descriptive analysis, Independent sample t-test, and Pearson Product Correlation have been applied for data analyses. To measure

the variance between groups an ANOVA was used. In addition, the variability within each age category was evaluated using each group's standard deviations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3. Correlation between mother attachment, father attachment and proactive attitude scale (N=600)

Scales	Proactive Attitude Scale r
Mother Attachment Scale	.528**
Father Attachment Scale	.523**

**p < 0.01

The above table shows a moderate positive correlation among Mother Attachment, Father Attachment and Proactive Attitude.

Table 4. Mean scores, SD, t and p values of the adolescents' scores (male, n =300 and female, n=300) on proactive attitude scale (N=600) according to gender differences

Scale	Male (n= 300)		Female (n = 300)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Proactive Attitude Scale	22.12	3.97	23.28	3.55	3.77	.000

df = 2, ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

The above table shows that female students scored higher as compared to male students on Proactive Attitude Scale (N=600).

Table 5. Mean scores and standard deviation showing differences with respect to age groups on proactive attitude scale (N=600)

Scale	13&14 Years Early (n =34)		15 & 17Years Middle (n=120)		18 & 19 Years Late (n=446)		F
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Proactive Attitude Scale	22.02	4.16	22.45	4.21	22.82	3.66	.999

df= 2 , **p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

The above table shows that late adolescent group scored higher as compared to early and middle adolescent group on Proactive Attitude Scale.

Table 6. One way ANOVA indicating mean scores and standard deviation on proactive attitude scale of the three groups of adolescents categorized according to low, middle, and high socio-economic status (N=600)

Scale	Group I Low SES (n=172)		Group II Middle SES(n=239)		Group III Upper SES (n =189)		F
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Proactive Attitude Scale	21.33	3.73	22.45	3.79	24.26	3.33	.000

df=2 **p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01

The above table shows that adolescents from upper socio-economic

status scored higher as compared to adolescent from middle and low socio-economic status on Proactive Attitude Scale.

The present study was designed to examine the relationship between emotional attachment of adolescents with their mothers and fathers and development of proactive attitude among them. Additionally, proactive attitude in adolescents with respect to age, gender and socio-economic status have been considered. Previous research suggest that parent-child relationship play a pivotal role in the development of adolescents' proactive attitudes (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Eberly & Montemayor, 1998) and various dimensions of parenting practices predict positive outcomes in children (Lapsley 1996; Carlo et al. 1999; Eisenberg & Valiente, 2002).

A number of interesting results emerged from our analyses. First the current research findings are consistent with earlier researches that positive development is promoted by the extent, the child is attached with his/her father or mother. Mikulincer and Shaver (2003, 2007) found that a secure person feels beneficial effects on emotion regulation, which is central to mental health, social adjustment, and social attitudes and values, and thereby promotes proactive behavior. Many developmental studies on proactive attitude document that it increases with age (Radke-Yarrow et al., 1983; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Pratt, Skoe, & Arnold, 2004).

Adolescence is a period in life that involves developmental changes. These developmental changes are different with respect to gender. The development of different trajectories in males and females are described in the current research. The study investigated the role of proactive attitude among male and female students. To examine gender differences, independent t-test was conducted. Female students reported higher levels of proactive attitude than their male counterparts. One variable that is often related to proactive attitude is gender. Research on the relationship between gender and proactive attitude has produced mixed results when comparing males and females. In the current study, males, on average, reported lower proactive attitude than females.

Across many studies, girls and women have been found to be more proactive than boys and men. For example, peers and teachers have been found to describe preschool-age, kindergarten-age, and

elementary school-age girls as more proactive than boys (Côté, Tremblay, Nagin, Zoccolillo, & Vitaro, 2002; Hastings, Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, Usher, & Bridges, 2000; Keane & Calkins, 2004). Culture is also one of the determining factors in the development of proactive behavior among children. Likewise, parents from low socioeconomic status are less responsive than parents from higher socioeconomic status groups (e.g., Knight, Kagan, & Buriel, 1982).

The present study contributes to our understanding of the relationship between parental attachment, and proactive attitude in adolescents. Proactive attitude is influenced by many factors. However, to acquire a complete picture of proactive attitude among adolescents, it is imperative to explore beyond the variables of age and gender. This study also focused on socio-economic status. The age related changes in proactive attitude were determined using an ANOVA. It has been found that scores on proactive attitude for both males and females began to progressively rise after lower and middle adolescence. The current study found high levels of proactive attitude in college students when compared to elementary and high school students. Hence, the trends in proactive attitude with respect to age groups can be found from the current research findings. The results are consistent with the majority of findings discussed previously.

A major task of adolescents is preparation for adulthood. Indeed, culture hinges on how effective this preparation is (Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg & Verma, 2002). High scores of female student in the current study are indicating that trends are changing and due importance is given to males as well as females in the process of socialization. Proactive attitude as a variable in this context needs to be explored extensively as differences may exist in the socialization of male and female adolescents in different cultures. Socio-economic status has been found to influence and affect a person's proactive attitude.

Several studies have reported significant findings regarding the effects of socioeconomic status (SES) on proactive attitude (Burbach, Fox, & Nicholson, 2004). The current research suggests that individuals with a higher SES have higher levels of proactive attitude than individuals who have a lower SES. Parental absence, unemployment of parents, family's economic condition and resources

contributes to the depletion of children's proactive attitude. Likewise, fathers and mother's higher levels of education and higher levels of family income can be other contributing factors that provide higher quality home environments for their children and thereby inculcating positive outcomes in their children. In order to address some of these issues, further research is needed. There were a number of variables that could have impacted the results.

The study revealed that parental attachment is positively related to the development and enhancement of pro social attitude among students. Findings of the current study support earlier researches. In order to study the relationship of mother attachment, father attachment and pro social attitude among students, scores on the scales were correlated. The analyses showed a moderate positive correlation among the variables used in the current study. Some researches indicate that proactive attitude increases from early to late adolescence (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). The current study supports previous researches in which proactive attitude has been found to be higher in late adolescence as compared to early adolescence. However, more researches are needed to explore the developmental trajectory of proactive attitude, as well as the ways in which adolescents may differ in their development of proactive attitude

CONCLUSION

Mother and father attachment both are linked to proactive attitude among adolescents. Overall female adolescents are more proactive than male adolescents. Proactive attitude increases with due course of time as the current study demonstrates that late adolescents have high proactive attitude as compared to early and middle adolescents. Moreover, high proactive attitude is found in adolescents belonging to upper socio-economic status as compared to adolescents belonging to middle and low socio-economic status.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There were a number of variables that could have potentially influenced the validity of the study. Because of a limited time frame,

students could only be surveyed between the hours of eight and two. Therefore, time of day could have had an influence on the demeanor of the students, causing possible misrepresentations of their true proactive attitude. Perhaps the most influential limitation of this study is that the participants involved were students who may not have acknowledged the importance of the study and therefore, not taken it seriously. Finally, adolescents are generally eager to please as well as be helpful. This eagerness may have influenced them to respond with more desirable answers.

In light of all these assumptions, the possible limitations are to be expected. Study on proactive attitude in adolescents was desirable since the body of research is lacking in this area. This current study has contributed data on mother attachment, father attachment and proactive attitude among adolescents; however there are some more limitations that must be considered. Keeping in view the limitations following suggestions are made:

1. A nation-wide sample from educational institutions in Pakistan should be taken in further studies so that the findings may be generalized to a larger population.
2. Qualitative studies can be designed in order to address these issues.
3. More demographic variables can be inducted in the research study to have a better understanding of these variables.

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