



Original Article

Quality of Parent-Child Relationship, Emotional Regulation and Interpersonal Difficulties in University Students

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ABSTRACT

Studies considered parent-child attachment a significant relationship that can have a great impact an adult's life. However, despite the parent-child attachment, the quality of the parent-child relationship is important, which has a significant impact on children's emotional, physical, and mental health. **Objective:** To find the relationship between the quality of the parent-child relationship and interpersonal difficulties with emotional regulation in university students. **Methods:** The Correlation research design was used for the quantitative method in the study. The study was carried out on 300 university students (males and females) with the age range of 18 to 25 years selected through stratified random sampling from private and government universities. **Results:** The quality of the parent-child relationship was observed to be a positive sign of emotional regulation and interpersonal difficulties in students. The current research also reveal that a negative or less satisfying relationship with their parents result in more issues regarding their emotions and relationships. **Conclusions:** Less satisfying parental relationships leads to various problems of psychological and social health of individuals.

INTRODUCTION

Bowlby's attachment theory has played a valuable role to explain the parent-child relationship and how these early life relationships impact an individual's development. Further, Bowlby considered the mother-child relationship a significant relationship that can impact an adult's life [1]. Child- parent relationship has an important impact on a child's emotional, physical, and mental health. Both parent and child interact each other daily in many situations and this interaction is highly affected by the quality of their relationship. The quality of a relationship refers to an individual's happiness and satisfaction level with their

parental relationship. Attachment theory also suggests that the quality of parent-child relationships exerts a large impact on children's development [2]. Emotional development and regulation is a complex process that involves initiating, hindering, and controlling one's emotions. However, studies indicated the poor quality of relationships with parents leads to emotional dysregulation of the individual [3]. Secure attachment promotes the development of healthy relations over time. Longitudinal research by Hair and Ling (2008) to study the effects of the quality of parent-child relationship on

emerging adult's mental well-being and misbehavior depicted that positive relationships between adolescents and their mother and/or father figures significantly predicted higher levels of mental well-being and lower levels of delinquency [4]. In emerging adulthood the nature of the parent-adolescent relationship is connected to the extensive variety of positive results, for example, mental and emotional prosperity modification and social competence and diminished problematic behavior, like substance abuse, misconduct, and sexual activities [4,5]. The student life is full of challenges and many students face many problems such as health and emotional issues [6]. As the individual grows up, his social network additionally develops and the interaction turns out to be more unique, changed, and complicated. He or she may suffer many issues such as interpersonal issues. Studies proved that emotional dysregulation has been linked to numerous forms of interpersonal difficulties. The effects of anxious and avoidant attachment patterns on child's emotional regulations and interpersonal difficulties shows that avoidant and anxious attachment patterns have been linked to emotional dysregulation and interpersonal problems which may lead to the alcohol problems in early adulthood [7,8]. The theme of the study was all about attachment, quality and emotional regulation of university students and its impact on their interpersonal relationships. The research purpose was mainly to find out the level of quality of parent-child relationships in university students. This research will help in understanding how important is parent-child relationship quality and due to lack of quality what kind of interpersonal difficulties students usually face.

METHODS

Correlational research design was used for quantitative and cross-sectional study. 300 students both male and female from private and government universities of Lahore with the age ranges of 18-25 years were selected for data collection. Quality of Parent-Child Relationship Scale, an ingenious scale was developed by the researcher to get the information of the participants regarding their parental relationship quality. Demographic Questionnaires: A demographic questionnaire is used to get the information of the participants were age, gender, family system, parental education and were include after reviewing the relevant literature.

Emotional Regulation Scale: The emotional regulation was an indigenous scale used to assess the student's emotional regulation strategies that how they regulate their emotions in stressful situations. Emotional regulation scale consisted on 24 items with two factors: emotion regulation and emotion dysregulation. In 2014

Interpersonal Difficulties Scale (IDS): Scale developed by Saleem, Zubia and Mahmood [9] was used to assess the interpersonal problems in University students. It consists of 59 items with six factors, dominated by others was 13 items, low self-esteem was 1 item, mistrust was 12 items, lack of assertiveness was 8 items, lack of boundaries was 8 items, and unstable relationship was 7 items. Items were score on 0 to 4. Keeping in view the ethical consideration, official permissions were taken from the university authorities assuring them of the utility of the research. Following that, participants of BS (Hons) students were selected and research protocols were administered to them in small groups of 25 to 30 after giving all the instructions in the research questionnaires. The researcher raises the participants; morale and interest in the study by sharing the objective and importance of the research before taking the required information. The researcher assured the participants that all information will confidential and the researcher requested the participants to give response honestly.

RESULTS

Table 1 described the mean age of the participants is 2.52 ± 0.501 years. The mean of mother education is 3.08 ± 1.087 . Similarly results showed the mean of father's education 2.68 ± 1.105 .

Variables	M	SD
Age	1.52	.501
Father education	3.08	1.087
Mother education	2.68	1.105

Table 1: Sample Description

Note: M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation, Means and Standard Deviations of Demographic, Variables of participants(N=300)

Variables	F	%
Age		
18-20years	145	48.3
21-25years	155	51.7
Gender		
Male	129	50.0
Female	171	50.0
Family system		
Joint	105	35
Nuclear	195	65
Class		
Bs1	63	21.0
Bs2	72	24.0
Bs3	80	26.7
BS4	85	28.3
Father education		
Uneducated	37	12.3
Matric	55	18.3
Intermediate	56	18.7
B.A and above B.A	152	50.7

Mother education		
Uneducated	47	15.7
Matric and above matric	104	34.7
Intermediate	46	15.3
B.A and above B.A	103	34.3

Table 2: Frequency and Percentages of the Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N=300)

Note: F= frequency, %=Percentage

Table 2 showed that 48% of participants were from the age range 18 to 20 years and 51% of students were from the 21 to 25 years age range. From 300, 129 (43%) participants were males and 171 (57%) were females. About 105 (35%) participants were from the joint family system and 195 (65%) were from the nuclear family system. Regarding class strategies of participants 63 (21%) were from BS1, 72 (24%) were from BS2, 80 (26%) were from BS3 and 85 (28%) were from BS4. Results also depicted that 37 (12%) of the participant's fathers were uneducated, 55 (18%) fathers had matric education, 56 (18%) were about intermediate education and 152 (50 %) had Bachelors and above. Similarly, among participants mothers, 47 (15%) were uneducated, 104 (34%) were matric or above, 46 (15%) mothers had intermediate education and 103 (34%) from 300 were graduate or above graduation.

Factors	PQMCR	NQMCR	EDR	ER	IDS	PQFCR	NQFCR
PQMCR		-.32***	-.12*	.55***	-.09*	.45***	-.27***
NQMCR			.26***	-.11**	.35***	-.08ns	.30***
EDR				-.17**	.54***	.02ns	.14**
ER					-.07ns	.35***	-.18***
IDST						-.09ns	.25***
PQFCRF1							-.44***
M	43.01	6.44	20.54	20.82	100.40	42.22	5.59
SD	12.10	4.37	6.90	6.06	35.04	11.94	4.26

Table 3 Correlation: Pearson correlation, Means and Standard Deviations of Quality of Parent Child

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Note: QMCR=total of quality of mother-child relationship, PQMCR=positive quality of mother child relationship, NQMCR=negative quality of mother-child relationship, QMCR=total of quality of father-child relationship, PQMCR=positive quality of father-child relationship, NQMCR=negative quality of father-child relationship, ER=emotional regulation, EDR= emotional dysregulation, ERT= total of emotional regulation DBO= dominated by others, LSC= low self-confidence, MT=mistrust, LA=lack of assertiveness, LB= lack of boundaries, UR= unstable relationship, IDST= total of interpersonal difficulties ***p < .00

Table 3 shows that the quality of the parent-child relationship, emotional regulation, and quality of the father-child relationship, interpersonal difficulties, have a

significant correlation with each other that confirms the first hypothesis of the main study that has been proved. The positive quality of the parent-child relationship has a positive significant relationship and a negative significant relationship are facing many issues. A positive relationship with the mother leads to a positive relationship with the father. Students who have the negative quality of the mother-child relationship have a negative relationship with their fathers. Results show that there is a significant relationship between emotional dysregulation and interpersonal difficulties and the quality of a father-child relationship which means that students who have the negative quality of father-child relationship have adopted more emotional dysregulation strategies and face more interpersonal problems.

Model	B	SEB	β	t	p<
Step 1 ^a = .16, R Δ .03)					
Mother education	.65	.28	.16	2.33	.021*
Step 2(R= .46, R Δ .17)					
Age	.8.35	3.87	.11	2.15	.032*
Mother education	4.12	1.84	.13	2.23	.020*
EDR	2.98	.246	.58	12.11	.001***
Step 3(R=.63, R Δ .37)					
EDR	2.64	.25	.51	10.32	.001***
NQMCR	1.31	.43	.16	2.99	.003***

Table 4: Regression, Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictor for Interpersonal Difficulties in Students (N=300)

Note: only significant results are reported, Step 1, F (6,289) =1.34 ***p<.001, Step II, F (8,287) =20.14, **p< .01, *** p<.05 Step III, F (12,283) =15.50, *p< .01, EDR=emotional dysregulation, NQMCR= negative quality of mother child relationship

Table 4 showed Hierarchical Regression Analysis of predictors of interpersonal difficulties in students. The model shows the highly significant predictors of interpersonal difficulties in students. However, overall results revealed that education of mother ($\beta = .13$, $t = (2.23)$ $P < (.020^*)$, mother AGE ($\beta = .11$, $t = (2.15)$ $P < (.032)$, Emotional Dysregulation ($\beta = .58$, $t = (12.11)$ $P < (.001^{***})$, Negative quality of mother child relationship ($\beta = .16$, $t = (2.99)$ $P < (.003^{***})$) were significant predictors of interpersonal difficulties in university students.

DISCUSSION

Family is an important structure of society that has a valuable role in one's life. Parent-child relationships are biologically based and individuals' development beyond childhood and adolescence is influenced by these parent-child relationships. The transaction between childhood to adulthood is a crucial developmental phase of life that is influenced by individual, social and familial circumstances. Adolescents are commonly university time periods and

today university life is full of challenges. Students may face a lot of pressures and problems such as emotional, academic stress-related, and interpersonal relationship [9]. The purpose of the current study is to explore the strength of relation of parent-child and the effect of the level of quality of the relationship. Basically, it explains the level of satisfaction in parent-child relationships, as the behavior of the mother toward the child and also the behavior of the father. How students perceive it either is positive or negative. There is a lot of difference between the individualistic and collectivistic cultures, in individualistic culture, basically focuses on personal growth and development, and self-actualization is based on intrapersonal relationships and equality and personal goals. On the other hand, collectivistic culture is basically group work and interpersonal relationships [10]. Also, the support of others and feelings of belongingness from others. An indigenous scale was developed for assessing the quality of relationships with parents in university students. Two main factors are extracted positive quality of relationship and negative quality of relationship in which main factors are parental involvement, communication, emotional support, giving more time to child, harshness, and discouragement from parents. Parents regulate and shape their children's abilities and their acquirement of emotional regulation through affiliation and interaction between parent and child [11]. The socialization of emotional regulation is based on parental rearing practices, modeling, and the emotional environment of the home and these might be influenced by attachment, marital relationships, and parenting styles [12]. Results of the present study indicate a higher relationship between parent-child interaction and emotional regulation. As results show that students who have a positive quality of relationship with father and mother have higher control over their emotions and adopt healthy ways to regulate their emotions. Also Eisenberg et al (2005) found that parental love, warmth, and affirmative expression are lead to the lowest level of externalizing problems in adolescents which is related to the emotional regulation [15]. Similarly, also results revealed that the negative quality of the relationship between mother and father leads to emotional dysregulation [16]. As modern research suggested that the unsatisfactory or negative relationship quality between parents and children may increase the high risk to develop unsatisfactory adult relationships in adulthood. Also, Bowlby describes that early parent-child relationships lead to later life relationships and students who had a negative and unsatisfactory relationship with their mother and father have more interpersonal problems i.e. low self-confidence and unstable relationships [17]. In Pakistani culture, the current study indicates that there is a

significant relationship between the negative quality of mother-child relations and the quality of father-child relationships. Parents are considered authority figures and children are restricted to obey both of them. Therefore, the mother's positive or negative relationship quality leads to the father's positive and negative quality of relationship respectively [9]. The purpose of the current study is to explore the strength of relation of parent-child and the effect of the level of quality of the relationship, basically, it explains the level of satisfaction in parent-child relationships, as the behavior of the mother toward the child and also the behavior of the father. How students perceive it either is positive or negative. There is a lot of difference between the individualistic and collectivistic cultures. The individualistic culture basically focuses on personal growth and development, and self-actualization is based on intrapersonal relationships and equality and personal goals. On the other hand, collectivistic culture is basically the group work and the interpersonal relationships [10]. An indigenous scale was developed for assessing the quality of relationships with parents in university students. Two main factors are extracted positive quality of relationship and negative quality of relationship in which main factors are parental involvement, communication, emotional support, giving more time to child, harshness, and discouragement from parents. Parents regulate and shape their children's abilities and their acquirement of emotional regulation through affiliation and interaction between parent and child [18]. Result of the present study indicate a higher relationship between parent-child interaction and emotional regulation. Similarly, also results revealed that the negative quality of the relationship between mother and father leads to emotional dysregulation. Literature also suggested that children's ability to regulate their emotions is influenced by the parental strict attitude and harsh parenting and it may lead to emotional dysregulation [16]. As modern research suggested that the unsatisfactory or negative relationship quality between parents and children may increase the high risk to develop unsatisfactory adult relationships in adulthood. Also, Bowlby describes that early parent-child relationship led to the later life relationships, and students who had a negative and unsatisfactory relationships with their mother and father have more interpersonal problems such as low self-confidence, and unstable relationships [17]. The socialization of emotional regulation is based on parental rearing practices, modeling, and the emotional environment of the home and these might be influenced by attachment, marital relationships, and parenting styles [18-24]. Therefore, the mother's positive or negative relationship quality leads to the father's negative and

positive quality of relationship.

CONCLUSIONS

Briefly concluding, the present study found that in Pakistan cultural issues regarding the quality of the relationship between parents and children go side by side. On the whole current research reveals that those who have negative or less satisfying relationships with their parent have been facing more issues regarding their emotions and their new relationships. Lack of satisfaction regarding parental relationships leads to various issues related to the psychological and social health of individuals. This study might be helpful in psycho-education for parents and students.

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