

Appraisal of Child rearing practices - A gender analysis

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ABSTRACT

Child-rearing practices is a generalized term used to refer to characteristic ways of handling or dealing with one's children. The present study tries to find out if there exist any gender differences in the way children perceive the way in which they are reared. The sample used in the study consisted of 650 school and college going teenagers belonging to the age group from 13 years to 19 years. It included 331 males and 319 females. It also included students from urban and rural areas, from different religions, with different orders of birth and from different socioeconomic status.

The main scale used was Child-Rearing Practices Scale (Student Appraisal Form) constructed by George and Sananda Raj (2006). This measured the child-rearing practices of parents as perceived by their children in 13 different areas or sections, namely Acceptance, Punishment, Protectiveness, Responsibility, Responsiveness, Reward, Understanding, Non-critical, Permissiveness, Encouragement, Rapport, Emotional Stability and Patience and thus gave 13 scores for the child-rearing practices.

It was seen whether there was any difference in males and females regarding how they perceived the child rearing practices of their parents, both father and mother. The means and standard deviations of both males and females in the entire child rearing sub variables were calculated in terms of both father and mother and it could be seen that there was difference in all the child rearing practices. Except in one variable, females as a group had a higher mean score than the males. In order to find whether these differences in the means were significant or not, the t-test was done. The results of the t-test showed that among the 26 sub variables of child rearing practices, except 7 sub variables all the other 19 sub variables were significantly different in the two sexes. The variables which were perceived as similar or which were not perceived as different by both males and females include, acceptance shown by father, reward given by mother, understanding shown both by father and mother, encouragement shown by both father and mother and the rapport established by father. All the other variables were experienced as different by male students and female students, with females having higher scores than males in all the variables, except one, which is giving responsibility.

Keywords

Article Received: 10 August 2020, Revised: 25 October 2020, Accepted: 18 November 2020

Introduction

The family is a system of interacting individuals who reciprocally socialize and mutually regulate each other. The family environment has a profound role in the development and behavior of children. How parents bring up their children and how parental characteristics are infused into child personality, are questions that continue to inspire research.

The goals, values, and life style of parents have a great effect on the growing child, whether that is admiration and imitation or alienation and rejection. As the earliest and most durable source of socialization, a child's parents are the first people with whom he identifies, and they remain the strongest influence in his development. This overwhelming importance has led developmental psychologists to take an intense interest in parent-child interactions.

Over the years, and partly as a result of the mixed findings in parent-child interaction, most developmental psychologists have become increasingly skeptical about studying parent-child interactions through child-rearing practices. Based on the findings of particular interactions between parents and children, and between adults and children in general, it is clear that the way that an adult responds to a child's behavior can have a potent effect.

To a great extent, culture determines the way children are brought up and raised. Child-rearing practices vary from culture to culture. While the basic goals that parents have for their children are similar, culture can produce variations in the behavior and beliefs of parents. These differences in behaviors and beliefs the parents hold affect their child-rearing practices. Even in the same culture, no two sets of

parents have precisely the same attitude towards their children, nor do they rear them in exactly the same way. Some parents limit their caretaking to the essentials of feeding, cleaning, and sheltering their babies; others interact extensively with cuddling and games. The behavior of parents appears to affect a baby's social initiative and his ability to cope with frustration and stress.

One still hears occasionally what used to be a popular catch phrase: 'there are no problem children, only problem parents'. This statement refers, in part, to an explanation of why children fail to adapt to society's norms. Most parents make many complaints about their children and they often become worried and tensed about their child's incompetence and inabilities. These parents should realize that they are the people who can incorporate all the necessary abilities and competencies of life into their child. It is a fact that the experiences that a child gets from his parents equip him to excel in life. The way or the style in which parents rear or bring up their child surely influences the overall development of a child.

Parents have different views about the values of children, and they have different orientations toward childrearing. Since the middle of the twentieth century, a major thrust of research into social development and family processes has been directed toward characterizing the main types of parenting styles and investigating their consequences for child development.

One of the central questions in psychology is how we become the people we are, and it is generally accepted that the experiences that an individual has, go some way towards shaping his attitudes, his outlook on life, his moral values, his relationships with other people and his intellectual

development. Common sense, supported by the findings of research, further suggests that the period of childhood is of particular significance in this whole process of character formation, so that the way in which children are brought up is of considerable importance in the formation of the complete adult person. The atmosphere the parents create in the home and the child-rearing methods they use are crucial to normal personality development and significant progress toward socialization (Davis & Engen, 1975). Children of today must be reared for living in the world of tomorrow. The world of tomorrow is viewed as more mobile, nationally and internationally; more dynamic, with change being the rule instead of the exception; better educated, as demands for brain power increase; and more democratic, particularly in the equality of sexes. The greatest need is to develop goals for children to live by so that they can develop into more fully functioning human beings (Lugo, & Hershey, 1976).

There is no doubt that the way in which a child is brought up or reared has a great effect on his or her skills and abilities. Parents play a key role in imbibing all the essential abilities in their child. This investigation is basically intended to study the gender differences in the perception of child rearing practices. Child-rearing practices is a generalized term used to refer to characteristic ways of handling or dealing with one's children (Stratton & Hayes, 2013). According to Zimbardo and Gerrig (1999), it is the manner in which parents rear their children.

The main objective of the study was to find out whether there are any gender differences in child-rearing practices, stress tolerance, and problem solving. The hypothesis formulated is, there will be significant gender differences in all the sub variables of child-rearing practices.

Sample:

The sample for the study consisted of 650 teenagers from different schools and colleges in Kerala, of which 331 were males and 319 were females. The following table gives the details of the sample.

Table 1: Breakup of the sample based on Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	331	51
Female	319	49
Total	650	100

Tools:

The main variable of the study included child-rearing practices which is measured using the Child Rearing Practices Scale (Student Appraisal Form) which is a scale that measures the child-rearing practices of parents as perceived by their children. It is a scale developed by George and Sananda Raj (2006) and it contains thirteen sub variables with a total of 104 items.

The areas or sub variables of child-rearing practices selected for the study included Acceptance, Punishment, Protectiveness, Responsibility, Responsiveness, Reward, Understanding, Non-critical, Permissiveness,

Encouragement, Rapport, Emotional Stability, and Patience. All the thirteen sub variables were selected after extensive thought, literature review, discussions and reference of other related psychological tests. The items for these sub variables were prepared by referring to literature, definitions, related studies and other psychological tests which had direct and indirect relevance with the present test.

The draft scale was prepared using items selected or modified on the basis of a thorough survey of literature related to the conceptualization and measurement of the 13 subvariables. Self-descriptive statements were used as items as it was expected that it would provide a good measurement of the variables. The statements described the different ways in which father and mother interacted with their children. A total of 207 items were included in the draft scale. All the items were written in English and also translated into the regional language (Malayalam) for the convenience of the students. All the 207 items were constructed on the basis of 13 subscales and thus the items were grouped into 13 sections from A, B, C, to M. Section A contained 20 items, B contained 14 items, C contained 20, D contained 17, E contained 15, F contained 13, G contained 15, H contained 14, I contained 27, J contained 18, K contained 12, L contained 8 and M contained 14 items. The statements were prepared in such a way that the subject could respond on a 5-point scale by giving strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree as answers. The instructions, which were also given in English and Malayalam, preceded the items. The present scale consisted of 13 subscales, all of them which constituted how parents bring up their children.

Validity

Validity for the present scale had been highlighted in terms of face validity, content validity, and concurrent validity.

Face Validity

In the technical sense, face validity denotes not to what the test actually measures, but to what it appears superficially to measure (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). The Child Rearing Practices Scale seems to have good face validity as it appears to measure the Child Rearing Practices adopted by parents as perceived by their children.

Content Validity

Content validity is the degree to which a test measures an intended content area. In the present scale, the content area is child-rearing practices of parents as perceived by their children, which is adequately represented by the test items in the right proportion. This result was provided by the experts' judgement. For this purpose, the content of the test was submitted to group of subject-matter experts. These experts judged whether or not the items represent all the important areas of child-rearing practices and the result was satisfactory.

Concurrent Validity

Concurrent validity is one which is obtained by comparing the test score with scores obtained on a criterion available at present and there is no time gap in obtaining test scores and criterion scores. The test is correlated with a criterion which is variable at the present time. Scores on the newly constructed test is correlated with scores obtained on an already standardized test. The resulting correlation coefficient is an indicator of concurrent validity. The present scale was correlated with the Home-Environment Scale by Jawa. The two tests were administered to a sample of 100 students selected randomly. Their scores were correlated and a correlation coefficient of 0.91 was obtained (significant at 0.01 level). The value indicated that the test is a highly valid measure of child-rearing practices.

Reliability

Reliability refers to this consistency of scores or measurement which is reflected in the reproducibility of the scores (Singh, 2006). Internal consistency reliability indicates the homogeneity of the test. If all the items of the test measure the same function or trait, the test is said to be a homogeneous one and its internal consistency reliability would be pretty high. The most common method of estimating internal consistency reliability is the split-half method in which the test is divided into two equal or nearly equal halves. The common way of splitting the test is the odd-even method. The internal consistency (odd-even reliability) of the 13 subscales was calculated using Spearman-Brown formula. The following table shows the Spearman-Brown coefficients for the various elements of the inventory.

Table 2: Reliability Coefficients for the different child-rearing practices variables

Section	Sub variable	No. of items	Spearman-Brown Coefficient
A	Acceptance(CRA)	8	.690
B	Punishment(CRB)	8	.801
C	Protectiveness(CRC)	8	.881
D	Responsibility(CRD)	8	.691
E	Responsiveness(CRE)	8	.798
F	Reward(CRF)	8	.829
G	Understanding(CRG)	8	.960
H	Non-critical(CRH)	8	.689
I	Permissiveness(CRI)	8	.851
J	Encouragement(CRJ)	8	.913
K	Rapport(CRK)	8	.757
L	Emotional Stability (CRL)	8	.789
M	Patience(CRM)	8	.769

Just as in the case of each section, the odd-even reliability of the whole test was calculated using Spearman-Brown

formula. Here, the whole test that consisted of 104 items was divided into odd and even items and the Spearman-Brown coefficient was found to be .938.

Thus, the odd-even reliability of the tool for the standardization sample was found to be 0.938 and that for the sections or subscales ranged from .64 to .96.

Data Collection:

Data were collected from the different schools and colleges in Kerala. A total of 820 data were collected, from which 170 had to be discarded for different reasons. The responses were scored.

Statistical techniques:

After the collection of the data, coding of the collected data, and entry of the data into a computer, it was subjected to statistical analyses. The statistical tests used for the present study included the t-test.

Results

Gender Differences in Child-Rearing Practices Appraisal

The objective of the study was to see whether there was any difference in males and females regarding how they perceived the child rearing practices of their parents, both father (F) and mother (M). The means, standard deviations and the results of the t test of both males and females in all the child rearing sub variables were calculated in terms of both father and mother. Since child-rearing practices scale had a total of 26 sub variables, it is shown in two tables, namely, Table 3 and Table 4. Table 3 gives the results of the analysis for the six different child rearing practices variables, namely, acceptance, punishment, protectiveness, responsibility, responsiveness, and reward, as perceived by the children. Table 4 also gives the results of the analysis of seven different child-rearing practices variables, namely, understanding, non-critical, permissiveness, encouragement, rapport, emotional stability, and finally patience. Tables 3 and 4 together gives the scores for all the 13 sub variables of child rearing practices as perceived by children with respect to both the parents, thus making a total of 26 sub variables.

Table 3: Results of t test for males and females in six sub variables of child rearing practices

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
BrandEquity	<---	brand awareness	-.263	1.437	-.183	.855	
BrandEquity	<---	CorporateImage	-.530	1.251	-.424	.672	
BrandEquity	<---	CorporateSocialEntre	.667	.299	2.228	.026	
Q_11.10	<---	brand awareness	1.000				
Q_11.9	<---	brand awareness	1.093	.111	9.807	***	
Q_11.11	<---	brand awareness	1.071	.107	10.034	***	
Q_11.12	<---	brand awareness	-1.113	.110	-10.094	***	
Q_11.13	<---	brand awareness	1.160	.111	10.411	***	
Q_11.14	<---	brand awareness	.923	.101	9.141	***	
Q_10.14	<---	CorporateSocialEntre	1.000				
Q_10.12	<---	CorporateSocialEntre	.983	.092	10.704	***	
Q_10.8	<---	CorporateSocialEntre	.830	.088	9.455	***	
Q_10.4	<---	CorporateSocialEntre	.897	.088	10.138	***	
Q_10.3	<---	CorporateSocialEntre	.951	.092	10.339	***	
Q_10.1	<---	CorporateSocialEntre	.718	.079	9.056	***	
Q_10.16	<---	CorporateImage	1.000				
Q_10.13	<---	CorporateImage	.908	.091	10.003	***	
Q_10.6	<---	CorporateImage	-.950	.096	-9.881	***	
Q_10.5	<---	CorporateImage	-1.036	.099	-10.490	***	
Q_11.2	<---	CorporateImage	-1.062	.101	-10.478	***	
Q_11.1	<---	CorporateImage	-1.118	.102	-10.958	***	
Q_11.4	<---	BrandEquity	1.000				
Q_11.5	<---	BrandEquity	1.004	.102	9.878	***	
Q_11.6	<---	BrandEquity	-.828	.092	-9.029	***	
Q_11.7	<---	BrandEquity	1.019	.099	10.324	***	
Q_11.8	<---	BrandEquity	1.005	.100	10.022	***	
Q_11.3	<---	BrandEquity	.869	.095	9.174	***	

Table 4: Results of t test for males and females in seven sub variables of child rearing practices

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T value	Sig.
CRGF	Male	331	55.0363	10.6699	-1.698	.090
	Female	319	56.5110	11.4754		
CRGM	Male	331	55.2598	10.9273	-1.653	.099
	Female	319	56.7774	12.4589		
CRHF	Male	331	45.7976	8.1574	-3.182	.002
	Female	319	47.8245	8.0755		
CRHM	Male	331	45.5498	8.6728	-2.037	.042
	Female	319	46.9310	8.6123		
CRIF	Male	331	82.3444	11.8800	-.929	.009
	Female	319	85.0063	13.8298		
CRIM	Male	331	82.6103	11.7369	-2.617	.009
	Female	319	85.2539	13.9584		
CRJF	Male	331	68.9275	11.6354	-.929	.353
	Female	319	69.8119	12.6303		
CRJM	Male	331	69.0967	11.7616	-1.141	.254
	Female	319	70.2351	13.6367		
CRKF	Male	331	43.7885	9.1574	-1.809	.071
	Female	319	45.1034	9.3751		
CRKM	Male	331	44.2810	9.3217	-3.262	.001
	Female	319	46.7429	9.9168		
CRLF	Male	331	27.1118	5.5254	-4.682	.000
	Female	319	29.2006	5.5918		
CRLM	Male	331	27.0997	6.2328	-4.562	.000
	Female	319	29.2006	5.4666		
CRMF	Male	331	44.5801	7.2981	-3.152	.000
	Female	319	46.8683	7.4624		
CRMM	Male	331	44.6949	7.2149	-3.666	.000
	Female	319	46.8182	7.5506		

When we go through the mean scores of both the groups, we could see that there was difference in all the child rearing

practices. It can also be seen that except in one variable, females as a group had a higher mean score than the males. In order to find whether these differences in the means were significant or not, the t-test was done. The results of the t-test, namely t value and its significance are also given in the above two tables.

The results of the t-test showed that among the 26 sub variables of child rearing practices, except 7 sub variables all the other 19 sub variables were found to be significantly different in the two sexes. The variables which were perceived as similar or which were not perceived as different by both males and females include, acceptance shown by father, reward given by mother, understanding shown both by father and mother, encouragement shown by both father and mother and the rapport established by father. All the other variables were experienced as different by male students and female students, with females having higher scores than males in all the variables, except one, ie, giving responsibility. It can be said that females felt that their parents, both father and mother, gave them responsibilities in a lesser degree when compared to their male counterparts. This hesitation on the part of parents to allot fewer responsibilities to girl children might also be the reason why they are less stress tolerant and less confident in solving problems. Where the society should provide the girl child with opportunities to improve her capabilities, the parents themselves were acting as obstacles towards her progress. Now let us consider each variable separately.

When it comes to acceptance, females felt that mothers accepted them more than that was felt by their male counterparts about their mothers. This may be because mothers and daughters spent more time together than others in the family, as fathers and sons spent most of their time outside their home which is a usual system in a Kerala home. Also, mothers showed more of acceptance and affection to their teenage daughter as they know that it is the time when they needed more of that sort, which the mothers themselves might have longed for, in their teenage days.

In the case of the variable punishment, females felt that they did not receive as much punishment as their male counterparts. Result showed that males felt that they received more punishment from both mother and father. This may be because males tend to be rebellious during this age where females turn submissive. This rebellious behavior in turn may lead to more punishment. Also, males got more opportunities for interaction when compared to females, which might lead to instances that result in punishment.

Society had always regarded females to be delicate and fragile, who require and desire to be protected. Males, in turn, were always considered as protectors. The same attitude was shown here by the parents. Females had the feeling that both father and mother were more protective towards them. Their age may also be a factor that added to this protective behaviour on the part of the parents, who were mostly worried about their teenage daughters. This protective nature of the parents, more towards their daughters, may be the reason for giving less responsibility to the daughters, which was the next variable in the scale. Females felt that they were given less responsibilities while males felt that they were given more responsibilities by their parents. This is the only parent variable in which females scored lesser than the males.

Responsiveness showed by both father and mother were felt as more by females than by males. This meant that parents were more responsive to the needs and wishes of daughters than their sons. This might be because, in our society, we have a tendency to give more consideration to a female child than a male child. It might also be due to the difference in the nature of the needs and wishes of males and females.

Females also perceived that their fathers gave them more rewards, which was perceived as lesser by their male counterparts. This might be because of sex difference in the values given to such rewards. Females might give value to a reward, which might not be perceived as valuable by their male counterparts. Thus, even though both the groups might receive rewards, the perceived worth was different. Mothers were not perceived as giving more rewards by male or female children.

When it comes to being non-critical, females perceived both the parents as showing a non-critical behaviour towards them than their male counterparts. This might be because, the aggressiveness and activeness of the teenage male might lead to more criticism from the side of the parents when compared to the soft and loving nature of the teenage female. Males might be behaving in such a way that deserved some sort of criticism from the part of their parents.

It is also seen that females perceived both the parents as being permissive towards them i.e., females felt that their parents did not control them much. Their male counterparts felt that they were controlled more than they needed to be. This might be because boys engaged in many activities outside their home than girls. Because of this, they come up with many issues which forced the parents to exert some control over them.

When it comes to the rapport between parents and children, mothers were perceived as being more friendly towards their daughters than their sons. Again, this might be because of the more time spent by them together and also because a mother can identify more with her daughter than with her son.

Females also perceived both their parents as being emotionally stable than their male counterparts. Parents might show emotional instability towards their sons because of the particular attitude and behaviour on the part of their sons. The attitude and behaviour of a teenage female might be such that it does not evolve an unstable emotionality on the part of the parents. The behaviour of a teenage male might be such that it may evoke unstable emotional reactions from the parents.

Same is the case with the next variable, i.e., patience. Females might show behaviour patterns which could be tolerated by a parent whereas the behaviour and attitude of a son might be such that it would make a parent less patient towards them. That is why females perceived their parent as being more patient. It might also be that males found their parents to be more patient to whatever they do. It can be seen that except in responsibility, the female students perceived the rest 18 parent variables as more than the male students. This showed that in the case of females, a higher degree of parent variables did not lead to higher degree of stress tolerance, and problem solving confidence as seen in the general correlation results. In the case of females, some other factors might have a stronger effect than these parent

variables. The parent variables which were lower in female is responsibility and this might be a strong influential factor among the different parent variables in determining a girl child's stress tolerance and problem solving confidence.

Conclusion

The t-test results showed significant difference in how males and females appraised the behaviour of their parents. Significant sex differences were found in nineteen subvariables of child-rearing practices variables. Except the variable Responsibility, as given by both father and mother, females scored significantly higher than the males in the rest seventeen subvariables of child-rearing practices

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