



## **THE PSYCHOLOGICAL OUTCOMES OF PARENTAL RESPONSES IN RELATIONS TO THEIR CHILDREN'S EXPRESSIONS OF NEGATIVE EFFECT**

By

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The present research has the main aim to study the psychological outcome of parental responses to their children's expressions of negative effect in relation to loneliness and the attitudes of their children towards their parents. The correlation design was used to study the relationship of positive and negative parental responses to their children's negative affect with the loneliness and attitude of their children towards parents. The sample of the study comprised of 100 families of Shimla city having one male and female child (13-19 yrs. of age) besides father's education of at least graduate level. In order to observe the parental responses to their children's negative affect, Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale (CCNES) Mohsin Parent-Child Inventory (MPCI) and Loneliness scale were used to take the observations of the participants. The result revealed the positive Parental responses to the children's expressions of negative affect are significantly and positively associated with the attitude of their children but negatively to their loneliness while negative parental responses are significantly and negatively associated with the attitude of their children towards parents and positively to their loneliness.*

World Health Organization defines adolescence as the age group of 10-19 years. In India, adolescents comprise of one fifth (21.4%) of the total population (Ahmad et al. (2007). During these formative years, the physical, psychological and behavioral changes are maximum and mental well being form a relevant and important part of the adolescents' health which require support from parents, school and society at large to grow healthy society.



Adolescence is usually stormy transition period and they try to establish an identity for themselves and want independence from parents. Nowadays, due of rapid industrialization and urbanization as well as breaking up of joint family system, parents are finding it difficult to provide necessary care and support to adolescents. This has negatively influenced adolescents' mental health and consecutively emotional and behavioral problems are on the rise (WHO, 2005). There were increase in the rates of suicide, substance abuse and juvenile delinquency during the last decade especially, alcohol and other drug abuse have increased tenfold among adolescents (Shastri, 2008).

It has been established that the prevalence of depression or the signified behavioral problems among adolescents in India needs to be understood in the context of the high and ever increasing evidence of alcohol, drug abuse, loneliness, suicidal and criminal tendencies among young Indian population (Aaron et al., 2004). The prime issues that are in increase among adolescents are conduct and anxiety disorders (Egger & Angold, 2006) i.e. if not attended timely can be a misfortune and thus require attention.

In addition, these issues further shadow them in the School atmosphere and disappointing teaching process and the school as well. This has been observed that these social, behavioural and emotional problems among students complicate the academic complexity among the children and resulting in delinquency (Weerman et al., 2007). Teachers generally reported that these disturbing behaviors in the classroom are stress-provoking and worrying and hence needs to be attended directly. The studies have observed that these behavioral snags among adolescents are related to parent-child relationship, parental reactions to their children's problems, domestic violence and poor socialization which play a vital role on the behavioural outcomes of these children and consequently affecting the quality of life of the families (Srinath et al., 2005).

Family is the most vital unit of the social structure in India. General tensions, domestic violence, parent child conflict etc. impairing in their children behavior at an early age. Coleman (1988) found that the parents who established a harmonious relationship in the family develop healthier child behavior than the parents having discordant relationship. A warm parent attitude correlated significantly with child's adjustment and perceived competency. Barnhill (1979) observed



that the over permissiveness of parenting towards children in term of total freedom develop a feeling of insecurity, antisocial, aggressiveness and frustration.

**Presently, loneliness**– the perpetrator, which is prevailing in large content among the adolescents maybe the results of deprived parenting or inadequate parental responses, which brings a psychologically painful situation for the children and resulting in low self-esteem (Ponzetti, 1990). Which further leads to depression, eating disorders problems etc. and affecting the attitudes of the children (Mcwhirter et al., 2002). Infect, Inadequate parental responses give rise to Poor socialization and affect social competence, upsurges unhealthy behaviors and lack pro-social behavior that start during adolescence (Denham & Grout, 1992).

Parental confidence system and their expression in parent behavior broadly concerned to adaptive child behavior. Parent's negative reaction generally believed to be associated with negative socio emotional outcomes for children (Eisenberg et al., 1996). Non supportive parenting has been associated with negative outcomes and problem behavior among children. Eisenberg et al. (1992) suggested that punitive reactions to children's negative emotional expression prompt children to inhibit or suppress their emotions and subsequently turns deregulated and aroused in the long-term, when confronted with negative emotionally arousing situations. Gross and Levenson (1997) also found that restrictive emotional expressive behavior of parents increase sympathetic arousal, and the subjective experience of the distress as well.

Now it is the need of the hour that special attention is required to see the precision regarding the parent's perceptions of their role first and then towards their children's strength and growth. However, the research is lacking in India in this area only few studies in India have been reported on the role of parental responses and their role in relation with the behavioural outcome of the children..

The present research is an attempt to explore the relationship of the parental responses to their children's expressions of negative effect with the loneliness and attitudes of their children towards parents and entitled as, "The psychological outcome of parental responses in relations to their children's expressions of negative effect.



## Objectives of the Study

1. To study the **relationship** of **positive parental responses** in terms of their emotional expressiveness, emotion focused reaction, problem focused reaction and minimization reaction:
  - (a) **With the attitude** of their Male and female children towards their parents.
  - (b) **With the loneliness** of their Male and female children.
2. To study the **relationship** of **negative parental responses** in terms of their distress reactions and punitive reactions:
  - (a) **With the attitude** of their Male and female children towards their parents.
  - (b) **With the loneliness** of their Male and female children.

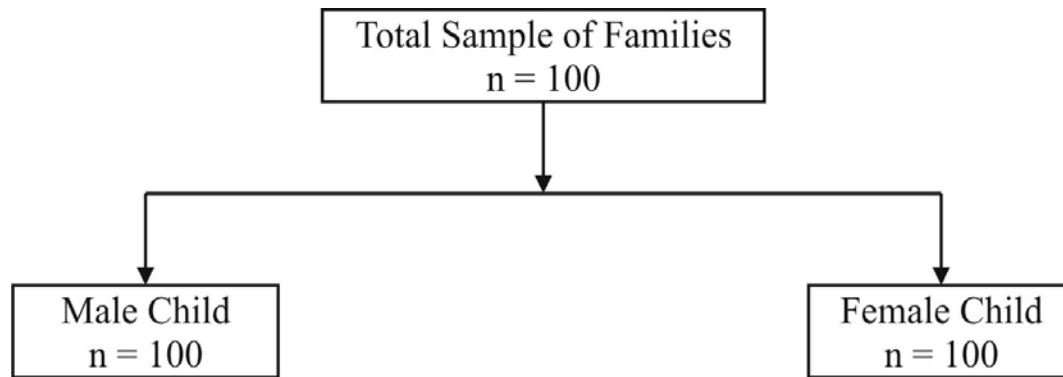
## Methodology:

### Design of the Study

The correlation design was used to study the relationship of negative (i.e., Distress Reactions, Punitive Reactions) and positive parental responses, (i.e., Expressive Encouragement, Emotional Focused Reactions, Problem Focused Reaction and Minimization Reaction) with the loneliness and attitude of the children towards their Parents. Further, t-test was employed to see the difference between male and female child on their attitude towards their parents.

### Participants:

The present study comprised of total 100 families in total. Firstly, list of the families of Shimla city were prepared having one male and female child of age 13-19 yrs. besides father's education of at least graduation level. Out of that two hundred families were finalized who gave their honest consent to participate in the study. Finally, 100 families were selected, using simple random sampling technique, to participate in the study.



## Tools of the Study

The following standardized research tools were employed to collect the data from participants for the study:

- Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale (Fabes, Eisenberg, & Bernzweig, 1990).
- Mohsin Parent-Child Inventory (Mohsin, 1979).
- Loneliness Scale (Asher et al., 1984)

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To meet the objectives of the study the observed scores of both the parents and their children were treated separately using correlation analysis:

### Positive Parental Responses and Loneliness (See Table I and II):

The correlation of the Expressive Encouragement (EE) of the parents is significantly and negatively correlated with the loneliness of their both male ( $r = -.77^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and female children ( $r = -.73^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The correlation of the Emotional Focused Reaction (EFR) of the parents is also significant and negative with the loneliness of both their male children ( $r = -.68^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and female children ( $r = -.63^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The result also showed the significant and negative correlation between the Problem Focused Reaction (PFR) of parents with loneliness of their both male ( $r = -.78^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and female children female children ( $r = -.76^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The scores of Minimization Reactions (MR) of the parents is also significantly and negatively correlated with the loneliness of their both male ( $r = -.72^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and female children ( $r = -.75^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ).



Hence, the results of the present study clearly indicate the positive parental responses are significantly and negatively correlated with the loneliness of their male and female children.

## Negative Parental Responses and Loneliness (See Table I and II):

Further, the correlation of the Distress Reaction of the parents and the loneliness of their male ( $r = .71$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and female ( $r = .73$ ,  $p < .01$ ) children came out significant and positive. The result also showed the significant and positive correlation between the Punitive Reaction (PR) of parents with loneliness of their Male ( $r = .75$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and female children ( $r = .75$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Hence, the result of the correlation analysis clearly indicated the significant and positive correlation of the negative parental responses of the parents with the loneliness of their male and female children both.

Therefore, Results of the present study clearly showed the significant and negative relations between the positive parental positive responses of the parents and the loneliness of their children i.e., better the positive parental responses of the parents lower the loneliness among them. The Result also showed the significant and positive relationship of negative parental responses of the parents with the loneliness of their children clearly showed that the higher the negative responses of the parents towards the negative affect of their children, higher the loneliness among them.

**Table I**  
**Correlation analysis of Negative Parental responses and Attitudes**  
**And Loneliness of their male children**

	Parental Responses						Attitude Towards Parents	Loneliness
	D R	PR	EE	EFR	PFR	MR	ATT.	LN
Distress Reaction (DR)	1	.70**	-.78**	-.72**	-.73**	-.66**	-.78**	.71**
Punitive Reaction (PR)		1	-.79**	-.80**	-.76**	-.81**	-.81**	.75**
Expressive Encouragement (EE)			1	.77**	.86**	.72**	.78**	-.77**
Emotion Focused Reaction (EFR)				1	.81**	.71**	.78**	-.68**
Problem Focused Reaction (PFR)					1	.80**	.84**	-.78**
Minimization of Reaction (MR)						1	.76**	-.72**
Attitude toward Parents							1	-.82**
Loneliness								1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level





**Table II**  
**Correlation analysis of Positive Parental responses and Attitudes**  
**and Loneliness of their Female Children**

	Parental Responses						Attitude Towards Parents	Loneliness
	DR	P R	EE	EFR	PFR	MR	ATT	LN
Distress Reaction (DR)	1	.70**	-.78**	-.72**	-.73**	-.66**	-.77**	.73**
Punitive Reaction (PR)		1	-.79**	-.80**	-.76**	-.81**	-.81**	.75**
Expressive Encouragement (EE)			1	.77**	.86**	.72**	.78**	-.73**
Emotion Focused Reaction (EFR)				1	.81**	.71**	.75**	-.63**
Problem Focused Reaction (PFR)					1	.80**	.81**	-.76**
Minimization of Reaction (MR)						1	.77**	-.75**
Attitude toward Parents							1	-.82**
Loneliness								1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Though the research is lacking on the relationship of parental responses of the parents and the loneliness of their children, yet some indirect evidences do support our result. Goossens et al. (2007) investigated the associations among psychologically controlling parenting, relational aggression, friendship quality, and loneliness during adolescence. In a sample comprised of middle adolescents and their parents, process analyses revealed that psychological control (indexed by parent and adolescent reports) positively predicted adolescents' self-reported relational aggression that, in turn, negatively predicted friendship quality and positively predicted loneliness.

Kochanska (1997) studied the temperamentally fearful children, and found that, gentle parental control was associated with optimal behavioural and emotional regulation, whereas temperamentally more aggressive ('fearless') children required firm control to achieve the same positive results. Belsky (1981) suggested that children who are more irritable may be more susceptible to rearing influence for other children and this may be due to the parenting that may be comparatively unable to exert a particularly strong impact on their child's growth and development. Ary et al., (1999) have suggested a model in which positive parental control in early and mid-childhood is important for preventing late disruptive behaviour. However, in adolescence, monitoring – and not control – is most closely associated with positive behavioural adjustment. Conger et al. (1992) found that family economic distress was associated with lower levels of positive



adjustment and higher behavior problems among adolescent males, and these associations were mediated by ineffective parenting. The family stress model, developed by Conger and colleagues (Conger et al., 1994), asserts that the effects of economic stress on children are mediated by a series of factors, one of which is ineffective (negative) parenting.

Moreover, in a study of empathy, Eisenberg et al, (1991) also found that discouragement of the expression of emotion seemed to be associated with anxiety and socially inappropriate responding. He has suggested that problem-focused parental reactions cultivate sympathy for boys. Parental problem-focused reactions help children to constructively cope with negative emotion, improve social skills (Denham. 1993) and help them to deal with day today stress and peer relations and consequently results in healthy socialization. A determinant of relevant parenting behaviors is an important attempt (Denham et al., 2003). Parental positive responses in the family is thought to influence children's emotional development through many avenues, including social modeling, provision of display rules, influence over children's representation and as a positive environment for other socialization behaviors (Halberstadt et al., 1999). Expressive children are expected to have parents who encourage their expressiveness and who are expressive. Emotional Expressiveness is important for social competence and peer acceptance (Saarni, 1999).

Eisenberg et al. (1992) found that restrictive or otherwise non-supportive parental reactions to children's negative emotions are positively associated with lower levels of both emotion regulation and social competence. He further concluded that problem- and emotion-focused reactions by parents are negatively related to revengeful behaviors in the child and positively associated with children's popularity and high self esteem. Problem-focused coping is also positively related to the children's expression of liking or disliking.

Domjan (2000) studied that punishment is the removal of a positive behavior as it decrease the likelihood of that behaviour being repeated and is effective agent for behavioural change of the children as children internalize norms of behavior as a reaction to the parental negative response. So it is suggested that the use of punishment or other power-assertive techniques is less effective than the processes of induction in internalization to their children's negative affect (Smith et al, 2005).





Eisenberg et al, (1999) found that children's externalization of emotions showed predictability for parental punitive reactions i.e. parents become more punitive in response to children's inability to regulate their emotions. The quality of the parent-child relationship moderates the effects of coping suggestions. Single fathers have less acceptance and encouragement of their child's negative emotions, and their children are less emotionally open than the children of intact households.

*Hence, the result of the present study confirms the positive parental responses of the parents are significantly and negatively associated with the loneliness of their children while the negative parental responses are significantly and positively associated with loneliness and can be responsible for their children's loneliness or socialization.*

### **Positive Parental Responses and Attitude of their Children:**

The result has also showed that, the positive parental responses, Expressive Encouragement ( $r = .78^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Emotional Focused Reaction ( $r = .78^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Problem Focused Reaction ( $r = .84^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Minimization Reactions ( $r = .76^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ) are positively and significantly correlated with the attitude of their male children towards their parents.

Similarly in case of female children correlations of Expressive Encouragement ( $r = .78^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Emotional Focused Reaction ( $r = .75^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Problem Focused Reaction ( $r = .81^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Minimization Reactions ( $r = .77^{**}$ ,  $p < .01$ ) are again significant and positive with the attitudes of their children towards parents.

Hence, the result of the parents study clearly indicate the significant and positive relationship between the positive parental responses and the attitudes of their children towards their parents

### **Negative Parental Responses and Attitude of their Children:**

The result of the correlation analysis showed the significant and negative correlation between the Distress Reactions ( $r = -.78$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Punitive Reaction ( $r = -.81$ ,  $p < .01$ ) of the parents and the attitude of their male children towards their parents.



Where as in case of the female children the correlation is again significant and negative between the Distress Reactions ( $r = -.77$ ,  $p < .01$ ). And Punitive Reaction ( $r = -.81$ ,  $p < .01$ ) of the parents and the attitude of their male children towards their parents

Hence, the results of the parents study clearly indicate the significant and negative relationship between the Negative parental responses and the attitudes of their children towards their parents.

*Therefore, the result of the parents study clearly showed the significant and positive relationship between the positive parental responses and the attitudes of their children towards their parents and a well the significant but negative relationship between negative parental responses and the attitudes of their children towards parents i.e., positive the parental responses of the parents , positive the attitudes of their children or the negative the parental responses of the parents , negative the attitudes of their children towards parents.*

Cox and Leaper (1961) in his study found that the positive attitude for the children is associated with establishment of competent and warm parent child relationship and peer group relationships whereas negative attitude of the children is associated with the scores of the children's having reputed high reputed aggression on the boys who rejected one or both parent figure.

Cass, (1952) found that neurotic and delinquent children revealed more negative attitude towards parents and peers than their normal controls. Harris and Tseng (1957), administrated a ten item sentence completion test to nearly 3000 children in a small rural town to study their attitude towards parents and peers and found that both boys and girls expressed pre dominantly favourable attitude towards parents and peers for normal boys and girls. However neutral or negative attitude pre dominated among the emotionally disturbed children in which boys were pre dominantly neutral or negative rather than positive in attitude towards their father, girls were mainly negative.

A longitudinal study by Denham et al. (2000) provides further support for the role of family expressiveness in children's regulatory behavior which directly linked to the attitudes of the children towards their family. Parental efforts to minimize the emotional expression and negative reactions of their children result in negative outcomes including lower levels of emotion regulation, attitude and social competence. Family expressiveness is important in shaping children's beliefs and attitude about their own and other's emotionality (Dunsmore and Halberstadt, 1997).



Eisenberg et al. (1992) found that emotion-focused coping by parents were negatively related to revengeful behaviors in the child and positively associated with children's popularity. Emotion-focused coping was positively related to social competence and negatively related to the child's overall frequency of anger episodes. The findings reported are consistent with other research that has likewise found that restrictive or otherwise non-supportive parental reactions to children's negative emotions are positively associated with lower levels of both emotion regulation and social competence reflecting upon the child's negative attitude. Eisenberg et al. (1992) examined the influence of parents' reactions to their children's anger coping responses. The results revealed problem- and emotion-focused reactions by parents are negatively related to revengeful behaviors in the child i.e. trigger the positive attitude.

*Thus, the result of the present study confirmed the positive Parental responses to the children's expressions of negative affect are significantly and positively associated with the attitude of their children but negatively to their loneliness while negative parental responses are significantly and negatively associated with the attitude of their children towards parents and positively to their loneliness – i.e., the psychological outcomes.*

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