



# RELATIONAL BEHAVIORS AMONG MALE ADOLESCENTS: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction/Back ground:** The period of adolescence is associated with marked physical as well as emotional changes which make them vulnerable to many problems. Adolescent's relation with parents, friends and school teachers can influence how they perceive life situations and can have great impact on their behaviors.

**Materials and methods:** This cross sectional study was done in 3 urban and 2 rural schools of Udupi taluk consisting of 630 male adolescents studying in class 8th-10th using a validated tool.

**Results:** About 71.4% male adolescents felt that, they could almost always talk closely with their mothers compared to their fathers. Most of the adolescents reported of positive atmosphere at home. Nearly 94.6% of them could seek their friends' help regarding studies whenever they needed. Majority of students (71.9%) reported that they could seek advice from at least one teacher at school whenever they have problem.

**Conclusion:** The present study showed that male adolescents relate more closely with their mothers compared to their fathers. Though majority of the students experienced favorable environment at home, a considerable proportion witnessed family problems. A small section of students felt that they didn't have any teacher with whom they can share their problems.

**Key words:** Male adolescents, behavior, relations

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is derived from the Latin word "adolescere" which means to grow. WHO defines adolescence as the age group of 10-19 years<sup>1</sup>, which constitutes 22% of the Indian population.<sup>2</sup> Owing to the major biological and physical changes during the period, adolescents are prone to emotional turmoil. Adolescence is characterized by conflicts with parents, extreme changes in mood, increased exposure to substance abuse, dependence on peers and risky behavior.<sup>3</sup>

In a person's life, the period of adolescence is often the most difficult phase. Prior literature has shown that adolescent well-being is positively associated with overall family system functioning and parental behaviours.<sup>4,5</sup> As adolescents pass through the difficult social, emotional and cognitive challenges

during the period, it is crucial for them to be attached to families to receive the necessary guidance and support.<sup>6</sup> Adolescents are more likely to seek guidance for difficult situations when they feel close to their caregivers and also value their opinions.<sup>7</sup> Apart from parental influence, contribution of teachers for the overall development of adolescents is of immense importance. Relationship with peers gain increasing importance and they begin to play a significant role in individual's lives during adolescence. There also occurs an increase in the time spent with peers.<sup>8</sup> The quality of adolescent-parents, adolescent-peer and adolescent-teacher interactions can influence, and may determine, the way adolescents perceive themselves in relation to others, their attitudes, and their behaviors.<sup>9</sup> Worldwide, the mortality and morbidity rates from violence, accidents and suicides have

been considerably higher among male adolescents compared to females. Many studies have also shown that boys spend substantial amount of unsupervised time on street or outside the home contrary to the girls exposing them to risk.<sup>10</sup> Origin of these problems among male adolescents have been linked to issues of their relationship with parents, peers and school environment. Considering the vulnerability of male adolescents and a clear of lack of data regarding the relational behaviors in this region which could possibly make them prone to increased morbidity and mortality, an attempt to study the same was done.

The objectives of the present research were to study the relationship of male adolescents with the parents; perception of male adolescents regarding the environment at home; and attitude and influence of friends and school teachers.

**MATERIALS AND METHOD**

This cross sectional study was conducted among 630 male adolescents studying in 8-10<sup>th</sup> standards of rural and urban schools of Udupi taluk. Using the formula  $n=4pq/d^2$ , anticipating 43.6% of the male adolescents to have atleast one close friend<sup>11</sup>with relative precision of 15% at 95% confidence level accounting for 20% non- response, the sample size obtained was 276. Assuming the design effect to be 2, the required sample size was 552. Considering an average number of adolescents in the school to be 110, five schools had to be selected to reach the sample size. Permission for study was obtained from the Block Education Officer (BEO) and the list of schools in Udupi taluk was obtained. From the list of schools in Udupi taluk, five schools were selected using probability proportionate to size. Based on the ratio of urban and rural schools, three urban and two rural schools were selected. The proposal was submitted to the Institutional Ethics Committee and ethical clearance was obtained. After taking prior permission of the headmaster of the school, the students were explained about the objectives of the study and consent was obtained from the parents/guardian and assent from the students. The questionnaire tool used for

data collection is adapted from a questionnaire prepared by Adolescent Health Clinic of Medical College, Kolkata and approved by the Adolescent Pediatric Chapter of Indian Academy of Pediatrics and WHO India Country Office in August 2002.<sup>12</sup> After obtaining the informed consent and assent, the students were administered a modified, pre-tested, structured, questionnaire to elicit the information about interaction with parents, friends, and school teachers. The data was entered and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15. The results have been presented as frequency and proportions in the form of tables and statements.

**RESULTS**

Of a total strength of 684 in five schools, 630 students participated in the study (response rate=92.1%). The present study included 630 male adolescents among whom 448(71%) were from urban schools and 182(29%) from rural schools. Maximum number of adolescents 514(82%) belonged to Hindu religion followed by Islam 77(12%) and Christianity 32(5%).

**Relationship of male adolescents with the parents:** As shown in table 1, the adolescents reported being closer, more comfortable to mothers and perceived that mother understood them better than their father. A higher proportion of male adolescents (71.4%) felt that it is almost always easier to talk to mother rather than father (55.1%). Majority of adolescents felt that mother gave them a lot of care and attention (90.8%) compared to father (79%). The frequency of adolescents who felt that mother makes them feel better when upset was 66.7%. Knowledge regarding who were the friends of the adolescents were known only sometimes by 64.4% of the mothers and 53% of the father. The proportion of adolescents who felt that mother and father did not know at all about how they spend their pocket money was used were 9.8% and 18.6% respectively. On the other hand, almost half of the adolescents (48.4%) felt their mother almost always knew about what they do in their free time in comparison to their father (30.5%).

**Table 1: Familial relationship of male adolescents with the parents n=630**

Perception regarding parents		Not at all	Sometimes	Almost always	No answer
Whether they felt mother/father is easy to talk with	Father	26 (4.1)	224 (35.6)	347 (55.1)	33 (5.2)
	Mother	21 (3.3)	141 (22.4)	450 (71.4)	17 (2.7)
Whether they felt that mother/father give them a lot of care and attention	Father	15 (2.4)	91 (14.4)	498 (79.0)	26 (4.1)
	Mother	7 (1.1)	42 (6.7)	572 (90.8)	9 (1.4)
Whether they felt that mother/father make them feel better when they are upset	Father	47 (7.5)	219 (34.8)	315 (50.0)	48 (7.6)
	Mother	21 (3.3)	168 (26.7)	420 (66.7)	21 (3.3)
Whether mother/father know who their friend are	Father	152 (24.1)	334 (53.0)	98 (15.6)	46 (7.3)
	Mother	65 (10.3)	406 (64.4)	144 (22.9)	15 (2.4)
Whether mother/father know how they spend their pocket money	Father	117 (18.6)	238 (37.8)	220 (34.9)	55 (8.7)
	Mother	62 (9.8)	214 (34.0)	313 (49.7)	41 (6.5)
Whether mother/father know what they do with their free time	Father	109 (17.3)	289 (45.9)	192 (30.5)	40 (6.3)
	Mother	71 (11.3)	228 (36.2)	305 (48.4)	26 (4.1)

**Table 2: Perception of male adolescents regarding the environment at home N=630**

Perception regarding the environment at home	Almost always	Sometimes	Never	No answer
Whether parents help them with their homework	134 (21.3)	306 (48.6)	168 (26.7)	22 (3.5)
Whether parents talk to them about how they are doing in school	375 (59.5)	221 (35.1)	26 (4.1)	8 (1.3)
Whether parents listen to them and take their feelings seriously	284 (45.1)	272 (43.2)	44 (7)	30 (4.8)
Whether family members pay more attention to their brother/sister	273 (43.3)	219 (34.8)	66 (10.5)	72 (11.4)
Whether family members joke and laugh together	324 (51.4)	273 (43.3)	21 (3.3)	12 (1.9)
Whether family members argue and fight	22 (3.5)	257 (40.8)	318 (50.5)	33 (5.2)
Whether family members smoke cigarettes excessively	21 (3.3)	73 (11.6)	498 (79)	38 (6)
Whether family members drink too much alcohol	22 (3.5)	110 (17.5)	461 (73.2)	37 (5.9)
Whether parents had come to school to participate in a meeting with students and teachers or to attend a school event in the past year	229 (36.3)	263 (41.7)	102 (16.2)	36 (5.7)

**Table 3: Attitude towards friends and influence of friends N=630**

Attitude towards friends and influence of friends	Agree	Somewhat agree	Do not agree	No answer
Have at least one friend they are very close with	461 (73.2)	100 (15.9)	53 (8.4)	16 (2.5)
Can talk to their friends if they have trouble at home	234 (37.1)	165 (26.2)	198 (31.4)	33 (5.2)
Friends sometimes pressure them to do things they do not want to do	112 (17.8)	134 (21.3)	346 (54.9)	38 (6)
It is very important what their friends think of them	325 (51.6)	148 (23.5)	113 (17.9)	44 (7)
Can ask their friends for help with their studies when they need it	496 (78.7)	100 (15.9)	25 (4)	9 (1.4)

**Table 4 .Attitude towards school and teachers N=630**

Attitude towards school and teachers	Agree	Somewhat agree	Do not agree	No answer
Whether the students enjoy their school	512 (81.3)	96 (15.2)	17 (2.7)	5 (0.8)
Whether the students have many good friends at school	506 (80.3)	89 (14.1)	25 (4.0)	10 (1.6)
Whether there is at least one teacher in school whom they can talk to when they have problems	337 (53.5)	116 (18.4)	143 (22.7)	34 (5.4)
Whether the students like participating in discussions in school	314 (49.8)	163 (25.9)	123 (19.5)	30 (4.8)
Whether the students try hard at school to do well	518 (82.2)	89 (14.1)	17 (2.7)	6 (1)

**Perception of male adolescents regarding the environment at home:** Only about 50% of the adolescents reported positively to their parent's involvement in their day to day activities (table2). About half of the (48.6%) adolescents felt that parents sometimes help them with their homework while 59.5% of them reported that parents talked to them about how they are doing in school and around one-third (36.3%) stated that in the past year their parents had visited school to either participate in the meetings or attended a school event. A few adolescents (16.2%) mentioned that parents never visited any event in school. Among the study subjects 45.1% of them felt that their parents are seriously concerned about their feelings. A fairly large proportion of adolescents (43.3%) felt that their family members always paid more attention to their siblings. Almost half (51.4%) of the adolescents reported that family members always joke and laugh together while 40.8% reported that family members argue and fight sometimes. A small percentage of 3% reported excessive consumption of alcohol and tobacco by family members.

**Attitude towards friends and influence of friends:** Table 3 depicts that friends are given a special place during adolescence. About two third (73.2%) of the adolescents agreed to have at least one close friend and 37.1% agreed that they can talk to their friends if they have trouble at home. A little more than half of the adolescents (54.9%) disagreed that their friends pressurized them to do

things they do not want to do. Almost half of them (51.6%) felt that it is very important what their friends think of them. A large proportion of adolescents (78.7%) felt that they can ask their friends for help with their studies when they need it.

**Attitude towards school and teachers:** Majority of study subjects (81.3%) enjoyed their school while only a small proportion of (2.7%) they did not enjoy their school. A large proportion of adolescents (80.3%) had many good friends at school. Encouragingly, half of the adolescents (53.5%) felt that there is at least one teacher in school whom they can talk to when they have problems. Almost half of the (49.8%) study subjects liked participating in discussions in school. Most of the adolescents (82.2%) tried hard at school to do well.

Among the adolescents, 62.5% reported regular participation in extracurricular activities. A small proportion of 18.3% adolescents sometimes skipped classes without any excuse. Most of the adolescents did not work for pay (67%); 22.5% worked rarely while 3.2% worked most of the times for pay. Most of the adolescents (68.9%) felt that parents didn't worry about not having enough money for essential things like food, clothing and shelter, while only 4.6% felt so most of the times.

## DISCUSSION

In the present study, participants felt that the mothers are more caring and concerned about their

children in comparison to their fathers which is in accordance to the study done by Luo L.<sup>13</sup> This study observed that during the period at junior high school, the proportion of mother-son (daughter) enjoying a –Good Relationship or a –Great Relationship, was 91.4% or 91.8% compared to father-son (daughter) enjoying a –Good Relationship or a –Great Relationship, 81.8% or 84.9% respectively. This study also showed that 43.2% of the students were frequently communicating with their mother regarding issues they were interested in which is akin to our study. Relatively high proportion of students sought help from their friends regarding studies in the present study, which is in contrast to study findings of Sodhi MK et al<sup>14</sup> (29.2%) and Luo L<sup>13</sup> (17%). A small proportion of adolescents reported of family problems compared to the findings of Chabra GS et al which reported almost one third (33%) of adolescents to have parental and family disputes.<sup>11</sup> Findings similar to the present study were reported by Chabra GS et al<sup>11</sup> where in 70.6% of adolescents felt that parents took care of their needs. Majority of subjects felt that they had at least one close friend which is in conformity to the findings of Chabra GS et al<sup>11</sup> which reported that 43.6% of the students had at least one or two close friends. A fairly minimal percentage of students in the present study said that they didn't have any close friend which is in contrast to the findings of Chabra GS et al which reported that 38.2% adolescents didn't have any close friends. Findings similar to the present study were reported by Deb S et al where in 64.2% of the adolescents participated in extracurricular activities.<sup>15</sup>

The present study showed that male adolescents relate more closely with their mothers as compared to their fathers. However, the reasons for the same were not addressed in the present study. Though majority of the students experienced favorable environment at home, a considerable proportion witnessed family problems in the form of arguments or fights between members. The study also showed that most of the participants shared excellent relation with friends in terms of problem sharing or taking help regarding studies. It also showed that a small section of students felt that they didn't have any teacher with whom they can share their problems. At least a quarter of study participants were working for pay at least sometime. Further research could be done exploring the reasons for their closeness with mothers. Role of parental and teachers in improving academic performance could be further explored through qualitative research. As relations are dynamic in nature, they are bound to change over time. The limitation of the present study is that it examined the relational behavior of the male adolescents at single point of time.

The present study gave significant insight into the relational behaviors of male adolescents with parents, family members, friends and school teachers. However, detailed explanations for the perceived opinions of the adolescents could not be understood from the current study. Further investigations can be done to understand the reasons for the same among the male adolescents.

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