



# REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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## A STUDY ON PERCEIVED PARENTING STYLE OF ADOLESCENTS

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### ABSTRACT

Parenting Styles hold both an objective reality as well as experienced reality for the child. It is this experienced reality which has been generated through a Situation Reaction Test in a sample of adolescents. Parenting Styles have been explored in the framework of Transactional Analysis and the study adds three more parenting styles to Clark's classification. Discrepancy between the perceived verbal and non-verbal parental message has also been seen.



**KEYWORDS:** Situation Reaction Test , Clark's classification.

### INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the stupendous rate of social change the value system is crumbling down, the strong familial bonds are weakening, the focus is shifting from within to without, communication pathologies are on the increase. The secure warmth of close knit families is giving way to distanced misunderstanding. Selfless love is lost under the guise of self love and false ego. In such a scenario what is happening to myths which have been maintained over so many generations with sanctity? What is happening to the one of the most salient relationship—the Parent Child Relationship? How is the child of today perceiving and processing the parental messages? Whither Shraavan Kumar, Rama and Pitra Devo Bhava Matra Devo Bhava ? were questions which intrigued the researcher to take up the present study with special reference to the parent-child relationships.

The framework of Transactional Analysis which gives a fresh insight into the internalization of one's parent's significant behaviour in one's own ego state has been taken up in the present research. Volumes of interdisciplinary research both theoretical and empirical has highlighted the role of parent-child relationship in the making and shaping of the child's personality. However, the value communication depends more upon the receiver, thus not the actual rearing or parental messages alone, but the perception of these messages by the children also which deserves equal attention.

Welch (1988) most appropriately comments "The parental influence is experienced by children in particular transactions on a specific occasion. The parental segment of the transaction is interpreted by the child as a 'message' and is usually an injunction ascription reinforced by a powerful voice and strong feelings. In response to the message, the child makes a decision about itself, others, the world and the quality of life." The present study had its inception in such framework.

**Purpose:**

To explore the perceived parenting style of male and female adolescents.

**Method:**

**Sample:**

The sample comprised of 100 male and female adolescent students from colleges of Kalaburagi District.

**Tool:**

Situation Reaction Test developed by Bhatnagar, Misra and Singh was used for the present study.

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOOL:**

First format of the tool comprised of 30 situations pertaining to Clarke's Parenting Styles<sup>3</sup> (Clarke, 1978). The situation was followed by a blank for the perceived reactions of the subject's parents or significant others in the situation. A thorough content analysis of the data revealed that besides the four parenting styles given by Clarke (Nurturant parent), Structuring and protecting parent<sup>5</sup>, Critical parent and Marshallowing parent, in T.A. framework, three other categories emerged. These new categories were Normative parent, (messages focusing on the judgemental good/bad, right/wrong and should/should not, imposing a normative) Questioning parent (messages in the form of question only) and finally discounting parent (messages which discount the being of the person).

Out of these 30 situations, seven situations, each of which emerged most representative of particular parenting style were picked up for the final tool. Besides, one situation which was neutral was also given. A pretesting was done on 40 adolescents where they were asked to give the reactions of his/her significant other for the situation, as well as denvice their reactions on a chart of 10 facial expressions. These expressions were happy, angry, sad, scared, lonely, mad, silly, proud, neutral and disgusted.

**Procedure:**

The SRT was individually administered along with the chart of the facial expressions. Thus the subject gave both the verbal, as well as, non-verbal reaction of his parents or significant others.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

Percentage analysis was worked out for each situation representing a specific parenting style. Among eight parenting style interestingly, it is nurturing parent followed by controlling parent and normative parent (72%, 62% and 55% respectively) which show a close one to one correspondence between the stimulus item (situation) and the perceived parenting style (as reaction) as is clear in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**Perceived Parenting Style for Situations on SRT**

Perceived Ps.	NP	SP	NOP	CP	QP	DP	MM	Neutral
St. Situations of Ps. ↓								
Sit 1 (NP)	72%	5%	15%	6%	-	1%	-	1%
Sit 2 (SP)	1%	36%	2%	32%	19%	7%	1%	2%
Sit 3 (NOP)	41%	3%	55%	1%	-	-	-	-
Sit 4 (CP)	1%	11%	1%	62%	9%	16%	-	-
Sit 5 (QP)	11%	12%	10%	15%	37%	7%	-	8%
Sit 6 (DP)	7%	3%	13%	23%	4%	36%	-	14%
Sit 7 (MM)	40%	8%	20%	9%	5%	-	22%	1%
Sit 8 (Neutral)	2%	47%	6%	12%	16%	3%	6%	5%

It is clearly indicated that situations most likely to arouse nurturant parent, normative parent and controlling parent do in reality arouse such messages and are perceived by adolescents rather clearly.

However structuring and protecting is, by and large, perceived as structuring and protecting, as well as a controlling message. Work in this area with reference to internalized parenting style also corroborates to this finding. It was found that first and foremost structuring and protecting messages are very rare in our culture, and even if they are given then the accompanying non-verbal communication makes them as if they are coming from controlling parent (Singh, '98). Similarly NOP Messages were primarily perceived to be normative messages (viz. Raja beta syndrome, the good boy syndrome) (55%). However 41% adolescents reproduced reactions which are NP messages. It could also be attributed to the fact that both NP and NOP in valence seem to be positive. Questioning is threatening and almost always perceived negatively. However, the situation stimulus for QP obtains only 37% responses which can be clearcut parental messages representing Q.P. barring marshmallowing they fall in all other parenting styles. This leads to the conjecture that questioning is excessive in our' parenting and we tend to ask questions as our reactions to what children do.

Discounting which is the most self defeating and negative parenting style, tearing the basic worth of the child also receives DP responses (36%) followed by another negative parenting (CP – 23%).

Situation pertaining to marshmallowing interestingly obtain 40% responses which are NP messages, 20% which are NOP and 22% which are 22%, In her study on internalized parenting styles of adolescents, Singh (1998) reported that there seemed to be some misperception of the MM messages as positive in the absence of real nurturance and love, as well as, the stroke hunger.

Similarly, Neutral situation led to NP responses. This is giving some indication about unhealthy stroke economy (Steiner, 1986) and more indepth exploration. The message is perceived in totality only when we take both verbal and non-verbal aspects of it. Hence an attempt was also made to see the extent of discrepancy between the verbal message given and the non-verbal expression accompanying it. As mentioned earlier, a chart of 10 faces each depicting a definite emotion was also given and besides the positive and negative emotions, a face with neutral expression was also made. The responses of the subjects were coded as either consistent with the verbal content of the said parenting message (viz. choosing angry expression with a CP verbal message or a happy face with NP verbal message) or discrepant (viz. choosing a happy or proud expression and giving a scolding / rejecting message from CP or DP or even Q.P.). An interesting finding of the study is the choice of neutral expression by sizeable number of subjects therefore the final picture that is emerging has three categories of consistent, discrepant and neutral.

It is clear from Table 2 that among the 800 messages generated by 100 students for the perceived reactions of their significant others for 8 situations the most dominant were NP messages (176) followed by CP (155), SP (125) and NOP (122). The marshmallowing and neutral were the least (29 and 32).

It is a healthy note that the positive NP superimposes all others for the need for approval and the fear of rejection by parents induces the child to introject the values of the parents and define them as his / her own. Moreover, the child gradually internalizes the expectations of parents and significant others, judging the self by the same standards.

**TABLE - 2**  
**Consistency between Verbal and Non-verbal perceived parenting style for SRT**

Parenting Style →	Consistent		Discrepant		Neutral		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Situation on SRT ↓							Freq.
NP ↓	162	92%	1	0.6%	13	7.4%	176
SP	23	18.4%	48	38.4%	54	43.2%	125
NOP	94	77.1%	16	13.1%	12	9.8%	122

CP	142	91.6%	3	1.9%	10	6.5%	155
QP	80	87.9%	2	2.2%	9	9.9%	91
MM	11	37.9%	7	24.3%	11	37.9%	29
Neutral	31	96.9%	1	3.1%	-	-	32
Total	608	76%	79	9.9%	113	14.1%	800

With reference to the consistency between verbal and non-verbal segment of the message the results clearly denote that it is the stimulus situation for NP, DP and Neutral and CP which obtain high consistency between verbal and non-verbal message (92%, 92.9%, 96.9% and 91.6% respectively). Maximum discrepancy between verbal and non-verbal is for structuring and protecting (38.4%) and marshmallowing (24.2%).

What is most intriguing is that, for SP (which happens to be a very healthy parenting style) the expression accompanying the message is neutral (43.2%). Similarly for questioning (39.9%) and M.M. also (37.9%) the expression is neutral. The results in the earlier table can now be more clearly understood. It is because of this neutral, vacant expression on the face that cognizance and meaning to the highly specific SP and QP is not perceived in such structured manner.

The total percentage also is suggestive, for 76% of messages, the correspondence between verbal and non-verbal is high while for 14.1% of messages the non-verbal expression is neutral giving ambiguity to the verbal message spoken and finally 9.9% giving discrepant expression to the verbal message.

For effective and healthy parenting we need to look at this finding and make more concrete efforts towards eliminating the ambiguity (neutral) and discrepancy from our parenting, for empirical evidences do exist which report on relationship between perceived parenting and emotional expressiveness (Pramanicks, '93 ; Oliver et.al., '93). Further, comparison of parenting behaviour in a study by Mohan and Nalwa (1996) indicated that non-deprivation emerged as a significant factor contributing to more positive perception of parenting by adolescents. This has been also **supported by** Chattopadhyaya and Biswas (1993).

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