

Parent-Child Communication and Children's Psychological Well-Being and Self-Concept

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Abstract

During the developmental period of life, the environment in which they grow up and the degree of communication between parents and children both have an impact on how they establish their sense of self-concept and their wellbeing. The purpose of the current study is to assess the association between psychological wellbeing, self-concept, and parent-child communication. Data was collected from 120 participants using The Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (PACS) by Barnes, H. L. (1982), The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being by Kern et al., 2016 and Self-concept scale (Robson, 1989). Results were analysed using Pearson correlation which suggests significant correlation was found between happiness and child communication ($r=.485^{**}$ N=120, $p=0.00$). Also, negative correlation between child communication and self-concept. However, no significant correlation was found between parent-child communications. Therefore, one possible explanation is that children might not want their parents to learn about their personal experiences initially.

Keywords: *Self-Concept, Psychological Wellbeing, Communication*

Language is the most powerful and only tool to communicate with oneself and with others. Communication allows us to describe opinions, share beliefs and information which forms the perspective of an individual about life.

This Research paper is on “*Parent-Child Communication and Children's Psychological Well-Being and Self-Concept*” and has been authored by **Delnaz Irani**

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Growing children who are learning to comprehend knowledge, facts, beliefs and stories about their environment, about life, positive interaction plays a crucial role in shaping personalities, self-esteem and interpersonal skills. As suggested by researchers, parent-child interaction contributes to the development of self-concept and well-being. Levitt (1998) investigated the relationship between emotional disturbance, stress, and the development of adolescent self-esteem. He also studied the association between communication issues between children and parents. Results indicated that good parent-child communication not only improves children's self-concept but also impacts all aspects of their development, such as their motivation, attitudes, life patterns, and emotional health. This highlights that language plays an important role because children's and parents' communication have an impact on academic success, contentment, and well-being, as well as the prevention of stress and depression in children.

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According to the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky, language helps in cognitive development and it enhances the understanding and learning to share information among each other using language. He believed that a child learns language from socializing and language can be used as the easiest way to communicate with people.

A study conducted by Banham (2000) focuses on the concept of language development by Vygotsky and explores the perception of parents about the target phrases and its effect on a child's self-concept. Results highlighted the concern that parents lack understanding of how to communicate with their children and does sharing negative feedback with them is important? Moreover, only 33% of parents were aware about what is self-concept and till which age self-concept is almost developed.

Generally, child shares closest bond with his family and friends, thus it is important that parents have effective communication style because parents are the first teachers and child is a learner who needs to be moulded in a way that they develop effective communication skills which will help them express and form their thoughts ideas and beliefs in a constructive manner. Importance of quality of verbal and non-verbal expressions used to communicate with children is not limited to acquiring interacting skills but also contributes to build-up emotional competence, that is how a child perceives, interprets, and regulates the emotions and feelings in a productive way. A study by Aktar (2017) focuses on the impact of negative emotions of parents during the first year of postnatal leads to the transmission of depression and anxiety. It was observed that the child echoes their parents' everyday emotional expressions and reactions. According to research, there is a considerable association between parental exposure to negative emotions, including anxiety and depression, and a child's emotional development. As a result, children are more likely to inherit psychological issues like depression and anxiety from their parents. Such research findings highlight the fact that during the developmental year children are sensitive to information and exposure to negative verbal or non-verbal language can have major influence on emotional development of a child.

Communication can be the key for maintaining a healthy relationship, interacting with adolescents can be quite challenging for parents as they are in the transition age, they are learning to adapt with new ways to live a life which demands freedom and privacy

from their parents, hence limiting their conversations about their personal life whereas parents wish to learn about every aspect of their life. This communication gap becomes one of the reasons of parent-child conflict which induces fights that might include negative communication style like yelling, using harsh words that affects overall wellbeing of both. However, a research study by Hollmann (2016) suggests that parents' belief about the child and supportive attitude promotes parent child quality communication and reduces negative behaviour tendencies.

Effect of parent- child interaction on self- concept and wellbeing.

Bandura proposed in social theory that how parents assess and promote their children's performance has a significant influence on their self-concept. Children learn that they can be successful at a task through effective verbal persuasion, and that this success may be transferred to new tasks. Adolescence is the age in which a child is curious and excited to explore the world. Thus, self-concept is an essential part of the child's overall personality and development. Also, decision making is a reflection of the quality of the child's self-concept. According to Harter (1996), The self-concept is our complete view of us." It depicts the whole range of our qualities and skills. It is essentially a cognitive construct that shapes our perception of ourselves and directs our behaviour. Development of a child's self-concept starts by the age of 6 years and since then they interpret experiences and give meaning to it as they observe and learn from their parents. As, from an ecological point of view parents are the part of their microsystem as a result of which parents words impact a child's self-concept and overall well being. Therefore, it is important to promote a healthy and positive environment for a child's self-development and emotional wellbeing. At young age the process of discovering who we are and forming our identities, our self-concept tends to be more malleable. These self-perceptions grow considerably more thorough and ordered as child get older and learn more about who he is and what's important. In line, a research study by Kobielski (2002) examined the relationship between positive communication and attachment of parents with children on adjustment outcomes. Results reveal that quality communication and adjustment among parent and child is significantly associated with social adjustment, emotional adjustment and self-esteem. Our interactions with other people play a factor in how we establish our sense of self. Others in our lives, besides our family and close friends, can influence who we are as individuals. For instance, one study (Pesu, 2016) discovered that a high-performing

student's self-concept is higher the more their teacher believes in their skills. The stories we hear can also help us create our sense of self. One study, for instance, discovered that female readers who were "truly transported" into a tale about a main character who played a typical gender role had a stronger feminist self-concept than those who weren't as touched by the story. In another study, Keizer (2019) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the impact of parents and child attachment style and effect of their relationship on self-concept. Results show that changes in the mother-child relationship and changes in the parental relationship are important for both sons and daughters' self-esteem, whereas changes in the father-child attachment relationship are solely related to adolescent daughters' self-esteem. In the context of family systems theory, which emphasises interactions inside families as well as those between families and the circumstances in which they live. Individuals' functioning is affected by intrapsychic factors as well as their place in the system they are in, subject to the system's pushes and pulls, such as competing emotional demands, role definitions and expectations, boundary and hierarchy issues, coalitions and collusions, loyalty conflicts, family and institutional culture and belief systems, double binds, projective identifications, and systemic anxiety. In addition, a system's self-correcting and self-enforcing feedback loops can promote or undermine disease, health, disintegration, or resilience. However, Self-concept is dynamic, therefore it can shift over time. Our surroundings have an impact on this procedure. The way we perceive ourselves in these circumstances and how society perceives them both actively contribute to how we perceive ourselves in the future. In a study by Bireda (2018) examined the correlation between parent-child interaction and children's wellbeing measures. According to the study's findings, there is a strong correlation between children' subjective well-being and how well their parents communicate with them. These studies support the idea that a parent's language has a significant impact on how well-adjusted and confident their children become. The purpose of the current research is to determine how parent-child relationship affects adolescents' psychological health and sense of self.

Method Objectives

- To assess the relationship between parent communication and child communication.
- To assess the relationship between child communication and self-concept.
- To assess the relationship between child communication and wellbeing.

Hypothesis

- There will be a significant relationship between parent communication and child communication. (Level of significant value at 0.05).
- There will be a significant relationship between child communication and self-concept. (Level of significant value at 0.05).
- There will be a significant relationship between child communication and wellbeing. (Level of significant value at 0.05).

Participants

Aim of the present study was to assess the correlation amid parent-child communication, self-concept and emotional wellbeing. The data was collected from children who were 10-18 years old and parents who were in the age range of 25-40 years. In total 120 participants voluntarily filled the online questionnaires.

Measures

- **Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (PACS)**

The Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (PACS) developed by Barnes, H. L. (1982), consists of two subscales that measure 1) the degree of openness in family communication that comprises of 10 items and 2) the extent of problems with family communication which consist of 10 items. The measure comprises 20 items for adolescents and 20 for parents. The internal consistency of the scores, measured by Cronbach's alpha, were 0.87 for the openness subscale and 0.78 for the problems subscale. The test-retest reliabilities were 0.78 and 0.77 for the openness and problems subscales, respectively.

- **The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being**

The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Wellbeing

(Kern et al., 2016) measures five subscales:

- a) Engagement: refers to being absorbed, interested, and involved in an activity. A state of extreme engagement known as "flow" is when you become so engrossed in a task that you lose all concept of time.
- b) Perseverance: refers to the ability to persist in one's efforts and pursue a goal in the face of obstacles. Even if it takes some time, you complete the tasks you begin.
- c) Optimism: refers to feeling optimistic and secure about the future. It entails generally having a positive outlook.

- d) Connectedness: refers to the experience of receiving these feelings from others. Being surrounded by others is not enough; you must also feel connected to them.
- e) Happiness: a general feeling of happiness, cheer, and pleasure with life. Even though you may not always feel joyful, you typically feel generally satisfied with your life.

It consists of a total 20 items with five-point likert scale and Internal consistency estimates range from 0.74 to 0.92. Test-retest reliabilities range from 0.23 to 0.71.

- **Self-concept scale**

The SCQ is a self-report scale measuring self-esteem (Robson, 1989). It consists of 30 items the scoring is performed on an eight-point scale, ranging from completely disagreeing to completely agreeing. The SCQ have reliability, Cronbach's α of .89 and validity .70; i.e., the correlation between the scores on the SCQ and estimates of self-esteem made by experienced clinicians on a 10-point visual scale for a sample of psychiatric patients.

Results

Pearson correlation was used to analyse the association amid parent-child communication, self-concept and emotional well-being.

Table 1

Sowing the descriptive statistics

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Child communication	70.6134	6.69063	120
Parent communication	66.2689	6.35356	120
Self-concept	125.3884	22.90174	120
C	4.0651	.87543	120
P	3.1492	.85452	120
O	3.5672	.87315	120
H	3.5462	.52679	120
E	3.2773	.96429	120

Table 1, shows that the sample size, N=120 and mean value for child communication, parent communication, self-concept and connectedness (C) Perseverance (P), Optimism (O), Happiness (H), Engagement (E) are 70.6134, 66.2689, 125.3884, 4.0651, 3.1492, 3.5672, 3.5462, 3.2773 respectively.

Table 2

Shows correlation between child communication, parent communication, self-concept and connectedness (C) Perseverance (P), Optimism (O), Happiness (H), Engagement (E).

	Child communication	Parent communication	Self-concept	C	P	O	H
Pearson Correlation	1	.035	-.113	.045	.026	.030	.485**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.709	.221	.628	.775	.750	.000
Sum of Squares and Cross-products	5282.218	173.370	-2055.429	30.996	17.861	20.342	201.876
Covariance	44.765	1.469	-17.419	.263	.151	.172	1.711

Table 2, shows the Pearson correlation among child communication, parent communication, self-concept and connectedness (C) Perseverance (P), Optimism (O), Happiness (H), Engagement (E). There was a negative correlation between child communication and self-concept ($r = -.113$ $N = 120$, $p = 0.00$) and significant positive correlation was found between child communication and happiness ($r = .485^{**}$ $N = 120$, $p = 0.00$).

Discussion

Purpose of the present study was to assess the relationship between parents- child communication, self-concept and psychological well-being. During the initial years of development children learn major vocabulary from parents and begin to understand about themselves how they explain them to be or children often act in a way that their parents tell them. This study of the relationship between parent-child communication, self-concept and wellbeing reveals the negative correlation between quality of child-communication and self-concept of children. Research evidence suggests, because parents express expectations and attitudes to their children during these encounters by employing both verbal and nonverbal cues to convey meaning in various contexts and circumstances. When adults speak to youngsters, they frequently use meaningless terms or words. Often it is observed that adults label negative remarks to children, like, "You're driving me nuts," or "What did I just say?" When examining problems involving young children from an ecological standpoint, it is essential to take into account the parent-child microsystem. According to Bronfenbrenner, the child's exposure to this system "colours his or her complete perception of the world" and that the "affective tone" or emotional climate is the key factor to take into account. A nurturing, receptive, and reciprocal environment where a kid may form a positive self-concept is what is meant by a positive environment. The atmosphere fosters the development of the kid's self-assurance and competence by creating a sort of "social momentum" in the youngster. A dysfunctional environment causes "social deadweight"

in which the youngster loses motivation (Garbarino & Abramowitz, 1992:42). This unfavourable environment includes "what is said (or not said), what is done (or not done)," and all microsystem behaviours. In line with the present results that there is no significant correlation between parent and child communication, in a study conducted by Robert (1993) investigated the link between life satisfaction, self-esteem, and parent-child communication. The study, however, discovered results that were inconsistent with those of earlier studies. He discovered no connection between children with high levels of self-esteem in adulthood and parental communication. It is believed that this distinction between adults and children and adolescents stems from the requirement for adults to have no communication with both parents. This is due to the fact that when they become older, the children have other responsibilities like starting a family and having a career. This implies that even when utilizing the same age level, the connections between these two variables are still inconsistent. Thus, according to experts, parents' interactions with their kids do not significantly affect whether or not they grow up to have positive self-concepts. This suggests the existence of additional, more powerful factors. According to a study by Harter (1998), the relationship between the two variables of parent-child communication and self-concept is only fairly strong ($r = 0.37$). The study found that parental contact with children does not significantly affect how kids form their sense of self. He argued that young people often turn to their peers because they feel more comfortable talking to them about their problems than to their

parents. Children who cannot communicate effectively, however, will develop a poor self-concept. This would explain why, despite the fact that parental communication is not a significant contributor to children's self-concept development, children nevertheless require their support, ideas, and guidance to avoid social problems. Furthermore, results of the present study reveal that child communication with parents is significantly correlated with happiness. In a research study by Yun, 2017 emphasizes the significance of parent-adolescent communication and friendship quality in predicting adolescent happiness. These results highlight the importance of friendship quality and parent-adolescent communication in creating teen happiness improvement programmes.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the present study is because the collection of the research data through online medium dyad data was not collected from all the children and their parents. Also, the sample size was not enough to generalize the current results.

Future research suggestions

Future research studies can determine various factors responsible for developing self-concept among children and the influence of parent-child communication on emotional and psychological wellbeing. In the present study only, quantitative measures were used to gather the information however further studies can use qualitative research methods to explore the dynamics of parent-child communication.

Conclusion

Present study explored the relationship between parent-child communication, self-concept and psychological well-being. Results suggest that child-communication is significantly correlated with happiness. Thus, it explains the importance of encouraging quality conversation with children to promote psychological wellness. And negative correlation was found between child-communication and self-concept which suggests that communication of children can be one of factor for developing self-concept.

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Appendix

Parent-adolescent communication scale Adolescent Form:

1. I can discuss my beliefs with my mother/father without feeling restrained or embarrassed.
2. Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my mother/father tells me.
3. My mother/father is always a good listener.
4. I am sometimes afraid to ask my mother/father for what I want.
5. My mother/father has a tendency to say things to me that would be better left unsaid.
6. My mother/father can tell how I'm feeling without asking.
7. I am very satisfied with how my mother/father and I talk together.
8. If I were in trouble, I could tell my mother/father.
9. I openly show affection to my mother/father.
10. When we are having a problem, I often give my mother/father the silent treatment.
11. I am careful about what I say to my mother/father.
12. When talking to my mother/father, I have a tendency to say things that would be better left unsaid.
13. When I ask questions, I get honest answers from my mother/father.
14. My mother/father tries to understand my point of view.
15. There are topics I avoid discussing with my mother/father.
16. I find it easy to discuss problems with my mother/father.
17. It is very easy for me to express all my true feelings to my mother/father.
18. My mother/father nags/bothers me.
19. My mother/father insults me when s/he is angry with me.
20. I don't think I can tell my mother/father how I really feel about some things.

Parent Form:

1. I can discuss my beliefs with my child without feeling restrained or embarrassed.
2. Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my child tells me.
3. My child is always a good listener.
4. I am sometimes afraid to ask my child for what I want.
5. My child has a tendency to say things to me that would be better left unsaid.
6. My child can tell how I'm feeling without asking.
7. I am very satisfied with how my child and I talk together.
8. If I were in trouble, I could tell my child.
9. I openly show affection to my child.
10. When we are having a problem, I often give my child the silent treatment.
11. I am careful about what I say to my child.
12. When talking with my child, I have a tendency to say things that would be better left unsaid.
13. When I ask questions, I get honest answers from my child.
14. My child tries to understand my point of view.
15. There are topics I avoid discussing with my child.
16. I find it easy to discuss problems with my child.
17. It is very easy for me to express all my true feelings to my child.
18. My child nags/bothers me.
19. My child insults me when s/he is angry with me.
20. I don't think I can tell my child how I really feel about some things.

The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being.

1. When something good happens to me, I have people who I like to share the good news with.
2. I finish whatever I begin.
3. I am optimistic about my future.
4. I feel happy.
5. When I do an activity, I enjoy it so much that I lose track of time.
6. I have a lot of fun.
7. I get completely absorbed in what I am doing.
8. I love life.

9. I keep at my schoolwork until I am done with it.
10. When I have a problem, I have someone who will be there for me.
11. I get so involved in activities that I forget about everything else.
12. When I am learning something new, I lose track of how much time has passed.
13. In uncertain times, I expect the best.
14. There are people in my life who really care about me.
15. I think good things are going to happen to me.
16. I have friends that I really care about.
17. Once I make a plan to get something done, I stick to it.
18. I believe that things will work out, no matter how difficult they seem.
19. I am a hard worker.
20. I am a cheerful person.

Self-concept scale

1. I have control over my own life.
2. I'm easy to like.
3. I never feel down in the dumps for very long.
4. I can never seem to achieve anything worthwhile.
5. There are lots of things I'd change about myself if I could.
6. I am not embarrassed to let people know my opinions.
7. I don't care what happens to me.
8. I seem to be very unlucky.
9. Most people find me reasonably attractive.
10. I'm glad I'm who I am.
11. Most people would take advantage of me if they could.
12. I am a reliable person.
13. It would be boring if I talked about myself.
14. When I'm successful, there's usually a lot of luck involved.
15. I have a pleasant personality.
16. If a task is difficult, that just makes me all the more determined.
17. I often feel humiliated.
18. I can usually make up my mind and stick to it.
19. Everyone else seems much more confident and content than me.
20. Even when I quite enjoy myself, there doesn't seem much purpose to it all.
21. I often worry about what other people are thinking about me.
22. There's a lot of truth in the saying "What will be, will be".
23. I look awful these days.
24. If I really try, I can overcome most of my problems.
25. It's pretty tough to be me. 26. I feel emotionally mature.
26. When people criticise me, I often feel helpless
27. When progress is difficult, I often find myself thinking it's just not worth the effort.
28. I can like myself even when others don't.
29. Those who know me well are fond of me.