

AMOGHVARTA

ISSN : 2583-3189



Behavioural Problems between Boys and Girls in Context with Parent Child Relationship and School Environment

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



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Abstract

The present study was conducted on 64 boys and 64 girls with the objective to examine the difference in their behavioural and emotional problems caused due to the dimensions of PCRQ and School Environment Inventory. It was hypothesized that there will be significant difference between boys and girls in the predominance of behavioural and emotional problems in terms of various dimensions of PCQR and School Environment Inventory. For the verification of hypotheses, the respondents were administered PCQR, SEI along with PDS and obtained data were treated using t-test. The results supported the hypotheses. It was found that girls were more exposed to behavioural and emotional problems in the light of scores obtained on dominating, rejecting and disciplining dimensions of PCQR whereas boys were found more susceptible to loving, protecting and punishing dimensions of PCRQ. Further, boys were less and girls were found more susceptible to behavioural

and emotional problems in the light of dimensions of SEI. Thus, it was concluded that sex-difference is the significant contributor to the behavioural and emotional problems amongst students.

Key Words

Behaviour, Problems, Parent, Children, School Environment.

Introduction

Behavioral problems in children are a multifaceted issue, with their origins often rooted in various environmental, social, and psychological factors. Among these, the parent-child relationship and the school environment stand out as two of the most influential contexts. These settings play a significant role in shaping how boys and girls behave, both individually and in relation to their peers. While gender differences are a crucial element of these behaviors, the ways in which boys and girls experience behavioral issues are often distinct. The interaction between these factors can either mitigate or exacerbate existing challenges, influencing children's academic performance, social development, and emotional well-being.

The parent-child relationship is one of the most critical factors in the early development of behavioral patterns. From a young age, children internalize behaviors, emotions, and expectations based on the interactions they have with their caregivers. Boys and girls often receive different types of emotional and behavioral

guidance from their parents, which can lead to gendered patterns in behavior. Boys may be encouraged to be more independent and assertive, while girls might be socialized to be nurturing, cooperative, and socially aware. These early gendered expectations can lead to distinct forms of behavioral problems in boys and girls as they grow older.

For instance, boys are often more likely to exhibit externalizing behaviors such as aggression, hyperactivity, and defiance. These behaviors are often seen as more socially acceptable for boys, with parents and teachers sometimes overlooking or even reinforcing them. Girls, on the other hand, may be more likely to experience internalizing behaviors, such as anxiety, depression, and withdrawal. These emotional challenges are often less visible and may be dismissed or misinterpreted as shyness or social awkwardness.

The way parents respond to these behaviors can also differ based on gender expectations. Parents may be more tolerant of disruptive behaviors in boys, viewing them as part of normal male development. In contrast, girls may face greater pressure to conform to social norms and exhibit more controlled, composed behaviors. This discrepancy in expectations can lead to different coping strategies for boys and girls, with boys potentially developing maladaptive behaviors like acting out, while girls may internalize stress, leading to mental health issues like depression or anxiety.

The school environment is another critical setting where boys and girls face different expectations and pressures. Teachers often hold unconscious gender biases that can affect their interactions with students. For example, boys are frequently given more leeway when it comes to disruptive behavior, while girls may be expected to be more attentive and cooperative. These differential expectations can lead to frustration and feelings of alienation in both boys and girls, who may feel that they are not fully understood or appreciated for their unique needs.

Boys tend to struggle more with classroom discipline and academic engagement. Their higher levels of physical energy and impulsivity can lead to more frequent clashes with authority figures and result in higher rates of suspension and expulsion. Girls, on the other hand, may excel academically but face social pressures that manifest as behavioral issues. Bullying, relational aggression, and social exclusion are more commonly reported in girls, leading to feelings of isolation and emotional distress. The school environment, with its focus on conformity and structure, often exacerbates these gendered differences, creating an additional layer of stress for both boys and girls.

In summary, the behavioral problems exhibited by boys and girls in the context of parent-child relationships and the school environment are influenced by complex gender dynamics. While both boys and girls face unique challenges, their behavioral issues are shaped by the way they are socialized by their parents and the expectations placed on them by society and educational institutions. Boys tend to exhibit more externalizing behaviors, while girls are more likely to internalize their struggles. Understanding these gendered patterns is crucial for developing more effective strategies for managing behavioral problems, ensuring that boys and girls receive the appropriate support and guidance they need to thrive.

Review of Literature

A study by Rutter et al.⁹ (2006) found that boys are more likely to exhibit externalizing behaviors such as aggression, hyperactivity, and conduct problems compared to girls, who are more prone to internalizing behaviors like anxiety and depression. The research emphasizes that these differences are rooted in both biological factors and gender-specific socialization processes, which begin at an early age within the family environment. Baumrind² (1991) explored how different parenting styles authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful affect boys and girls differently. The research concluded that boys often benefit from authoritative parenting that encourages independence, while girls tend to thrive under more nurturing and protective styles. These varying parental approaches can influence how boys and girls express behavioral problems in different ways. Fennema & Sherman⁶ (1977) focused on the impact of teacher expectations and biases on children's

behaviors in school. They found that teachers often expect boys to be more disruptive and assertive, leading to more leniency toward their behaviors. Girls, in contrast, are expected to be compliant and quiet, often resulting in unnoticed internal struggles such as anxiety and self-esteem issues. These differential expectations create an unequal platform for boys and girls to navigate their behavioral challenges. A study by Skiba et al.¹⁰ (2002) analyzed school discipline practices and found that boys, particularly those from minority groups, were more likely to be disciplined for behavioral issues than girls. This gender disparity in discipline practices perpetuates a cycle where boys are disproportionately labeled as troublemakers, while girls' behavioral struggles, which are often internalized, remain less recognized. Dodge et al.⁵ (2003) examined the relationship between parenting styles and aggression in children, highlighting that parents of boys are often less likely to intervene when aggressive behaviors are displayed, seeing them as natural male behavior. In contrast, parents of girls may discourage overt aggression more strongly, leading to different coping mechanisms. This parental influence directly impacts the gendered expression of aggression in boys and girls. Thompson¹¹ (1994) reviewed how gender socialization influences emotional regulation in children. Boys are often taught to suppress emotions such as sadness and fear, leading to an increase in externalizing behaviors like acting out and physical aggression. Girls, however, are encouraged to express emotions but may face social pressures that promote emotional distress, which can result in internalizing behaviors such as depression and eating disorders. Research by Coie et al.⁴ (1993) highlighted the role of peer interactions in shaping behavioral problems. Boys are more likely to exhibit disruptive behaviors in school settings, which can affect their peer relationships and lead to exclusion or bullying. Girls, however, often experience relational aggression, such as gossiping and social exclusion, which can contribute to emotional problems and behavioral withdrawal. Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda⁸ (2004) focused on how parents' gendered expectations influence children's behaviors. Boys whose fathers engage more in traditional masculine roles tend to exhibit more overt behavioral problems, while girls with similarly traditional mothers may internalize social pressures and develop anxiety-related issues. These gendered influences are crucial in understanding the different manifestations of behavioral problems in boys and girls. Gilligan⁷ (1982) conducted research that emphasized the different ways boys and girls approach learning and classroom behavior. Boys are often more physical and engage in more direct verbal communication, leading to classroom disruptions. Girls, conversely, are more inclined to focus on relational dynamics and may struggle with perfectionism, social expectations, and academic pressure, often leading to internalized behavioral issues such as anxiety and depression. Bar-On¹ (2000) studied the role of emotional intelligence (EQ) in children's behavioral development and found that girls typically exhibit higher levels of EQ, leading to more effective emotional regulation. However, this can also lead to greater stress when emotional regulation becomes excessive, contributing to higher rates of internalizing behaviors like depression. In contrast, boys may struggle with emotional regulation but tend to externalize their emotions, resulting in aggression and behavioral disturbances. Chao³ (1994) explored the role of culture in shaping gendered behaviors within families and schools. In collectivist societies, there is often a stronger emphasis on conformity and obedience, particularly for girls, leading to more internalized behaviors such as social withdrawal. Boys, on the other hand, may receive more encouragement to be independent and assertive, resulting in a higher incidence of externalizing behaviors. This cultural lens highlights how societal norms influence the development and expression of behavioral problems in boys and girls.

These studies offer a broad understanding of how gender differences influence the development of behavioral problems, especially in relation to parent-child dynamics and the school environment. By examining these literatures, we can better understand the complexity of children's behavioral issues and the various external and internal factors that shape their actions and emotions. Behavioural problems of school students in Patna (Bihar) have not been studied in context of parent, child relationship and school environment. That is why study was warranted.

Objectives

The intended to compare behavioural and emotional problems between boys and girls in terms of dimensions of (i) parent child relationship questionnaire, and (ii) School Environment Inventory

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant different between boys and girls in the predominance of behaviour and emotional problems in terms of various dimensions of Parent Child Relationship Questionnaire.
2. There will be significant difference between boys and girls in the predominance of behaviour and emotional problems in terms of various dimensions of school environment inventory.

Method of study

Sample used

The sample comprised of 128 high school students having behavioural problems. The students were selected based on the report of teachers, parents etc. and data-obtained by Behaviour Problem Inventory. They were selected equally in respect of sex-difference (Boys : 64; Girls : 64). The respondents were of the age groups 13-16 yrs. They were of the class IX and X. The behaviour problem male and female high school urban students were selected from among student population of various schools of urban Patna. Other than the conditions of research the respondents were matched so far as practicable.

Design Employed

Between group design was used.

Tools used

- (1) A PDS was used to seek the personal information about the respondents.\
- (2) Behaviour Problems Inventory was used to identify the various behavioural problems amongst them.
- (3) PCRQ was used to measure dimensions of parental attitude.
- (4) SEI was used to measure dimensions of school environment.

Results and Interpretations

Table 01: t-value showing a comparison between boys and girls in terms of behavioural and emotional problems on the various measures or dimensions of parent child relationship (attitude) questionnaire

Dimensions	Respondents	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p
Loving	Boys	64	21.66	4.86	7.43	126	<.01
	Girls	64	15.19	4.52			
Dominating	Boys	64	17.25	4.61	6.38	126	<.01
	Girls	64	22.48	4.75			
Rejecting	Boys	64	17.91	4.82	6.68	126	<.01
	Girls	64	23.52	4.66			
Protecting	Boys	64	20.17	4.53	7.27	126	<.01
	Girls	64	14.28	4.60			
Punishing	Boys	64	22.98	4.55	6.90	126	<.01
	Girls	64	17.25	4.48			
Disciplining	Boys	64	14.18	4.71	8.28	126	<.01
	Girls	64	21.05	4.69			

It is clear from the results table-01 that girl group manifested more behavioural and emotional problem than boys group. The mean values of boys were higher in loving (Mean = 21.66), protecting (Mean = 20.17) and punishing (Mean = 22.98) dimension of parental attitude on the other hand girls manifested higher mean values on the measure of dominating (Mean = 22.48) rejecting (Mean = 23.52) and disciplining (Mean = 21.05) of parental attitude respectively. The t-values showing the significance of difference of means for loving (t = 7.14; df = 126; p<.01), dominating (t = 6.38; df = 126; p<.01), rejecting (t = 6.68; df = 126; p<.01), protecting (t = 7.27; df = 126; p<.01), punishing (t = 6.90; df = 126; p<.01) and discipline (t = 8.28; df = 126; p<.01) all were found significant.

Girls group manifested higher degree of behavioural and emotional problems than boys group on each of dimension of parental attitude scale namely loving, dominating, rejecting, protecting, punishing and disciplining. Girls often excel on the dominating, rejecting, and disciplining dimensions of parent-child attitude because they are frequently subjected to stricter social and behavioral expectations compared to boys. Parents may impose more control and rules on daughters due to concerns about safety, reputation, or traditional gender roles. This can result in girls perceiving their parents as more dominating or rejecting. Additionally, girls are often more emotionally perceptive, making them more sensitive to parental criticism and disciplinary actions, which intensifies these perceptions. Boys often excel on the loving, protecting, and punishing dimensions of parent-child relationship attitudes because parents may show more overt affection and physical care toward sons, influenced by cultural norms that value male children. Sons are often perceived as future caretakers of the family name, leading to greater protection and involvement. At the same time, boys may also face more direct discipline or punishment, as parents aim to instill strength and responsibility, reinforcing traditional masculine roles.

Table 02: t-value showing a comparison between boys and girls in terms of behavioural and emotional problems on the various measures or dimensions of school environment inventory

Dimensions	Respondents	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p
Creative Stimulation	Girls	64	41.02	4.56	7.34	126	<.01
	Boys	64	40.04	4.80			
Cognitive Encouragement	Girls	64	41.96	4.51	6.32	126	<.01
	Boys	64	47.08	4.63			
Permissiveness	Girls	64	42.29	4.55	6.99	126	<.01
	Boys	64	47.81	4.45			
Acceptance	Girls	64	41.98	4.69	6.35	126	<.01
	Boys	64	47.19	4.58			
Creative Rejection	Girls	64	41.22	4.66	7.83	126	<.01
	Boys	64	47.48	4.39			
Control	Girls	64	41.90	4.54	6.52	126	<.01
	Boys	64	47.25	4.81			

The results displayed by table-02 clearly revealed that means of girls group for creative stimulation (Mean = 41.02), cognitive encouragement (Mean = 41.96), permissiveness (Mean = 42.29), acceptance (Mean = 41.98), rejection (Mean = 41.22) and control (Mean = 41.90) differ significantly from means of boys group for creative stimulation (Mean = 47.04), cognitive encouragement (Mean = 47.08), permissiveness

(Mean = 47.81), acceptance (Mean = 47.19), creative rejection (Mean = 47.48) and control (Mean = 47.25). The significant t-values are for creative stimulation ($t = 7.34$; $df = 126$; $p < .01$), cognitive encouragement ($t = 6.32$; $df = 126$; $p < .01$), permissiveness ($t = 6.99$; $df = 126$; $p < .01$), acceptance ($t = 6.35$; $df = 126$; $p < .01$), rejection ($t = 7.83$; $df = 126$; $p < .01$) and control ($t = 6.52$; $df = 126$; $p < .01$).

Thus, girls group were found having prevalence of more behavioural and emotional problems as compared to boys group on the various measures of school environment inventory. Boys often excel over girls on overall dimensions of the school environment inventory—such as creative stimulation, cognitive encouragement, permissiveness, acceptance, creative rejection, and control—due to gender biases and differential treatment in educational settings. Teachers may unconsciously give boys more opportunities to explore, question, and express creativity, reinforcing cognitive stimulation and encouragement. Boys are also often granted more behavioral leniency (permissiveness), while being actively guided (control). In contrast, girls may receive more restrictive or compliance-focused feedback, limiting their engagement in these areas.

Conclusions

- (1) Sex-difference is found as a significant contributor to the growth and development of emotional and behavioral problems. Boys are more susceptible to loving protecting and punishing dimensions of PCR whereas girls are more susceptible to dominating, rejecting and disciplining dimensions of PCR.
- (2) Sex-difference is found a significant contributor to the growth and development of emotional and behavioral problems. Boys are less susceptible to behavioural and emotional problem than girls in respect of dimensions of school environment.

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