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Personal Problems, Personal Values and Pattern of Adjustment between Adolescent Boys and Girls

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Author

Dr. Kanchan Kumari
Department of Psychology
M.M. Mahila College
Ara, Bihar, INDIA

Abstract

The present study was conducted on 64 adolescent boys and 64 adolescent girls to make comparison between them in terms of their personal problems, personal values and patterns of adjustment. It was hypothesized that adolescent boys and girls would differ significantly from one another in terms of their (i) personal problem, (ii) personal values and (iii) patterns of adjustment. For the purpose, adolescents were administered YPI, PVQ and Hindi adaptation of Bell's adjustment Inventory. Besides these, they were administered PDS and data were obtained which were treated using t-test. The results supported their hypotheses. It was found that adolescent girls are more exposed to personal problems. Adolescent girls excelled over adolescent boys in terms of religious, aesthetic, family prestige and hedonistic values whereas adolescent boys excelled in terms of social, democratic, economic, knowledge, power and health values respectively. Adolescents girls manifested poor adjustment in almost all the

dimensions of adjustment. Thus, personal problems, personal values and patterns of adjustment are the function of sex-difference.

Key Words

Problems, Values, Sex-difference.

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage, marked by significant changes in physical, emotional, cognitive, and social domains. This period of transition, often referred to as the bridge between childhood and adulthood, is characterized by a heightened sensitivity to personal identity, social relationships, and societal expectations. Adolescents experience various personal problems, challenges, and opportunities for growth as they navigate this complex phase of life. At the same time, they form values, beliefs, and adjust to new roles, all of which contribute to their evolving sense of self and their ability to function within society.

Biological sex, typically categorized as male or female at birth, plays a central role in shaping the adolescent experience. While gender, which encompasses cultural and societal expectations, roles, and behaviors, is often fluid and socially constructed, biological sex has historically been linked with certain patterns

in emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development. Understanding how these factors influence the personal problems, values, and adjustment processes of adolescents is essential for addressing the needs of young people during this pivotal period of life.

Adolescence is often characterized by the emergence of personal problems, many of which are influenced by the biological and physiological changes occurring during this stage. These include identity crises, peer pressure, academic stress, family conflicts, and issues related to sexuality. Although both male and female adolescents experience these challenges, the nature and intensity of the problems they face can differ in accordance with their biological sex.

Research suggests that female adolescents often experience higher levels of emotional distress during adolescence, such as anxiety and depression. This could be due to a variety of factors, including hormonal changes, societal expectations regarding appearance and behavior, and interpersonal relationships that are emphasized more in female socialization. On the other hand, male adolescents may be more prone to externalizing behaviors such as aggression, delinquency, and substance abuse. These differences in personal problems can be partially attributed to the ways in which male and female adolescents are socialized to express their emotions and deal with stressors.

Further complicating this picture is the increasing recognition of the intersectionality of factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, which also influence the personal challenges faced by adolescents. In the context of biological sex, the experiences of boys and girls may be compounded by cultural pressures or normative expectations placed on them based on gender roles.

The process of values formation in adolescence is a complex interaction between personal beliefs, family influences, peer groups, and societal norms. Adolescents start to define their beliefs and values in relation to family traditions, peer group expectations, and broader cultural ideologies. Biological sex has long been seen as influencing the values young people prioritize and internalize.

For example, female adolescents are often socialized to prioritize nurturing, relationship-building, and emotional expressiveness. They may be encouraged to value empathy, cooperation, and communication. In contrast, male adolescents may be more likely to internalize values related to independence, achievement, and assertiveness. These gendered values are deeply embedded in cultural expectations and can affect how adolescents view themselves and their role in society.

However, there is growing recognition that these traditional gender norms may be limiting. Many adolescents, regardless of sex, are increasingly expressing values related to gender equality, self-empowerment, and social justice, which transcend the boundaries of traditional gender roles. The ongoing shift in societal views on gender may be fostering more fluid value systems that encourage both males and females to embrace a broader range of traits and behaviors.

Adjustment refers to how effectively adolescents cope with the changes and challenges they face in terms of psychological well-being, social interactions, and academic performance. The ability to adjust to the demands of adolescence is influenced by a combination of internal (biological, cognitive) and external (family, peer, societal) factors. Biological sex plays a role in how adolescents adjust to these challenges.

Female adolescents tend to develop stronger verbal communication skills, which may help them better articulate their feelings and seek social support. This may facilitate adjustment in terms of emotional regulation and social relationships. However, societal expectations placed on females regarding appearance and behavior can also create additional pressure, leading to adjustment issues related to body image and self-esteem.

Male adolescents, in contrast, are often encouraged to suppress emotional expression and adopt more stoic or independent behaviors. This socialization can make it more challenging for them to seek help when struggling with emotional or psychological issues, which may hinder their adjustment. Additionally, the pressures

placed on males to conform to norms of toughness, aggression, and dominance may affect their mental health and social relationships.

The intersection of personal problems, values, and adjustment during adolescence is deeply influenced by biological sex, which shapes not only the way adolescents experience challenges but also how they form their identity and adjust to their changing world. While there are clear differences between male and female adolescents in terms of emotional experiences, values, and coping strategies, it is important to recognize that the influences of culture, family, and personal temperament also play significant roles in shaping the adolescent journey. A comprehensive understanding of these factors can help guide interventions and support systems aimed at promoting healthy development during this crucial stage of life.

Review of Literature

Nolen-Hoeksema, S.¹⁰ (2001) explored the gender differences in emotional problems during adolescence. It was found that female adolescents tend to exhibit higher levels of internalizing disorders, such as depression and anxiety, compared to males. The study suggests that biological factors, along with socialization processes that promote emotional expressiveness in females, contribute to these gendered emotional experiences.

Implication: Understanding these differences can help design gender-sensitive interventions for emotional and psychological support during adolescence. Pomerantz, E. M., & Eaton, M. M.¹¹ (2001) examined the ways in which male and female adolescents adjust to school, family, and peer relationships. It found that while females often experienced better academic adjustment, males exhibited more externalizing behaviors such as aggression and substance abuse. These findings suggest that biological sex influences adjustment in different spheres, with females typically experiencing better social and academic adaptation but facing greater emotional challenges. Blakemore, J. E. O., & Hill, C. A.¹ (2008) highlighted how gender role socialization impacts the development of personal values and behavioral adjustment. It found that male adolescents are socialized to value independence, competition, and achievement, whereas females are encouraged to value nurturing, empathy, and cooperation. These gendered socialization processes influence both their emotional adjustment and their interpersonal relationships. The study emphasizes the need for interventions that encourage both genders to embrace a broader range of values, beyond traditional gender roles. Brown, B. B.² (2004) examined how peer influences affect male and female adolescents differently, especially in terms of adjustment. It concluded that female adolescents are more likely to seek social support from peers when facing personal problems, whereas males tend to rely on more solitary coping strategies. Interventions focused on improving peer relationships and promoting positive peer support systems could benefit both males and females, but should be tailored to their distinct needs and coping styles. Marcia, J. E.⁹ (1980) showed that while both male and female adolescents undergo similar processes of exploration and commitment in forming their identities, gendered expectations shape the content of their identities. For instance, females may prioritize relational aspects of identity, while males may emphasize achievement and autonomy. Identity development in adolescence should be understood as influenced by both biological sex and societal gender norms, and support systems should consider these factors in promoting healthy identity formation. Compas, B. E., et al.⁴ (1999) compared coping strategies between male and female adolescents facing stress. The findings revealed that females were more likely to use emotion-focused coping, such as seeking support or venting emotions, while males were more likely to use problem-focused coping or avoidance. Gender-based differences in coping strategies suggest that male adolescents may benefit from learning emotional regulation skills, while females may need support in developing problem-solving abilities. Lamb, M. E., & Lewis, C.⁸ (2004) focused on how family dynamics, such as parenting styles and family structure, impact the adjustment of male and female adolescents. It found that female adolescents typically benefit from greater emotional closeness with their mothers, while males may experience more conflict or emotional distance. Gender-sensitive family interventions are necessary to foster better emotional adjustment, particularly by addressing the different ways boys and girls interact with

family members. Chao, R. K.³ (1994) compared the psychosocial development of male and female adolescents across different cultural contexts. The research found that while cultural norms significantly shape adolescent values, biological sex continues to influence how adolescents navigate issues like autonomy, relationships, and emotional expression. This highlights the importance of considering both biological sex and cultural context when studying adolescent development and the challenges they face. Johnston, L. D., et al.⁷ (2006) examined the role of biological sex in adolescent substance use, identifying different risk factors for males and females. It found that males were more likely to engage in substance use due to peer pressure and external influences, while females were more influenced by internal factors such as emotional distress. Prevention programs for adolescent substance use should be tailored to the distinct motivations and challenges faced by male and female adolescents. Harter, S.⁶ (1999) focused on the relationship between body image and self-esteem in male and female adolescents. It revealed that females are generally more concerned with body image and appearance, which significantly affects their self-esteem, while males are more likely to derive self-esteem from physical strength and social success. Gender-specific interventions that address body image concerns in females and promote healthy self-esteem in males are necessary to improve adolescent mental health. Gilligan, C.⁵ (1982) found that male adolescents typically emphasize justice and rights-based values, whereas females tend to prioritize care and relationships. These differences reflect broader societal expectations tied to gender roles, and they impact how males and females navigate moral dilemmas and develop ethical reasoning. Programs aimed at developing moral reasoning in adolescents should acknowledge the gendered nature of value formation and encourage a balanced approach that incorporates both justice and care perspectives.

These reviews of literature underscore the critical role of biological sex in shaping adolescent development across various domains, including personal problems, value formation, and adjustment. While both male and female adolescents face challenges during this transitional stage of life, their experiences are influenced by gendered societal expectations, biological changes, and distinct coping mechanisms. Understanding these differences can inform more effective interventions and support systems that address the unique needs of each gender, promoting healthier outcomes for all adolescents.

Objective

The study intended to compare adolescent boys and girls in their of personal problems, personal values and patterns of adjustment respectively.

Hypotheses

- (1) Adolescent boys and girls will differ significantly from one another in terms of their family problem, school college problem, social problem, personal problem and overall problem respectively.
- (2) Adolescents boys will excel over adolescent girls in terms of their religious value, aesthetic value, family prestige value and health value respectively.
- (3) Adolescents girls will excel over adolescent boys in terms of their social value, economic value, knowledge value, democratic value, power value and health value respectively.
- (4) Adolescents boys and girls will differ significantly from one another in terms of their patterns of adjustment respectively.

Method of Study

Sample Used

The sample comprised of 64 adolescent boys and 64 adolescent girls. They were selected from among +2 schools from urban Patna using incidental-cum-purposive sampling technique. Other than the conditions of endeavour they were matched so far as as practicable.

Tools Used

- (1) A PDS was used to seek the necessary information about the adolescent boys and adolescents girls.

- (2) YPI by Mithilesh Verma was used to measure differential problems of adolescent boys and adolescents girls.
- (3) PVQ by GP Sherry and R.P. Verma was used to measure differential personal values of the adolescent respondents.
- (4) Hindi Adaptation of Bell’s Adjustment Inventory by Mohsin and Shamshad was used to measure patterns of adjustment of the respondents.

Results and Interpretations

Table 01: Table showing differential influence of sex-difference on their personal problems between adolescent boys and girls

Dimensions of Personal Problems	Sex-Difference				t-values (df=126)	P
	Adolescents Boys		Adolescent Girls			
	(N=64)		(N=64)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Family	34.28	4.57	40.07	4.67	9.15	<.01
School/College	20.66	4.39	28.15	4.51	9.34	<.01
Social	5.14	2.66	8.92	2.72	7.88	<.01
Personal/Emotional	24.86	4.48	31.09	4.60	7.79	<.01
Overall	84.75	9.39	109.20	9.51	16.44	<.01

It is clear from the result table-01 that adolescent girls adolescents boys differ significantly in terms of family problem, school/college problem, social problem, personal problem and overall problem. Adolescent girls were (40.07) excelled over adolescent boys (34.08) significantly in terms of family problem ($t=7.15$; $df=126$; $P<.01$). Further, adolescent girls (28.14) excelled over adolescent boys (20.66) significantly on the measure of school/college dimension of problem ($t=9.34$; $df=126$; $P<.01$). Similarly, adolescent boys (5.14) and adolescent girls (8.92) differ significantly in terms of social problem ($t=7.88$; $df=126$; $P<.01$). Adolescent girls showed superiority (31.09) over adolescent boys (7.88) significantly in terms of personal/emotional problem ($t=2.72$; $df=126$; $P<.01$). Finally, adolescent girls were found facing more overall problem (109.20) than adolescents boys (84.75) significantly ($t=16.44$; $df=126$; $P<.01$). Adolescent girls are more exposed to family, school/college, social, personal, emotional, and overall problems due to a combination of biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors. Hormonal changes during adolescence can heighten emotional sensitivity. Socially, girls often face greater expectations regarding behavior, appearance, and academic performance, increasing stress. They may also encounter more restrictions at home and gender-based discrimination or harassment in public or educational settings. Additionally, their tendency to internalize emotions makes them more vulnerable to emotional and interpersonal difficulties.

Table 02: Table showing differential influence of sex-difference in the growth and development of religious, aesthetic, family prestige and hedonistic values

Personal Values	Sex-Difference				t-values (df=126)	P
	Adolescent Boys		Adolescent Girls			
	(N=64)		(N=64)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Religious	13.42	4.39	18.60	4.70	6.40	<.01
Aesthetic	13.61	4.46	17.93	4.43	5.47	<.01
Family Prestige	13.75	4.25	18.68	4.38	6.38	<.01
Hedonistic	13.65	4.51	18.92	4.67	6.51	<.01

It is clear from the results table-02 that adolescent boys (N=64) and girls (N=64) differ significantly in terms of the growth and development of religious, aesthetic, family prestige and hedonistic values respectively. It is clear that adolescent girls excelled in religious (Mean =18.60), aesthetic (Mean =17.93), family prestige (Mean =18.68) value and hedonistic value (Mean = 18.92) over adolescent boys whose means on religious (Mean =13.42), aesthetic (Mean =13.61), family prestige (Mean =13.75) and hedonistic (Mean =13.65) values were low respectively. The significance of difference between the means were for religious value (t=6.40; df=126; P<.01), aesthetic value (t=5.47; df=126; P<.01), family prestige value (t=6.38; df=126; P<.01) and hedonistic value (t=5.51; df=398; P<.01) respectively. Adolescent girls often excel over boys in religious, aesthetic, family prestige, and hedonistic personal values due to socialization and gender role expectations. Culturally, girls are more encouraged to uphold family values, traditions, and emotional sensitivity, fostering stronger religious and aesthetic inclinations. They are also more likely to internalize the importance of family honor and prestige. Furthermore, girls may seek personal happiness and self-expression through socially acceptable means, leading to higher orientation toward refined hedonistic values like beauty, joy, and emotional fulfillment.

Table 03: Table showing the differential influence of sex-difference on the growth and development of social, democratic, economic, knowledge, power and health values between adolescent boys and girls

Sex-difference						
Personal Values	Adolescent boys		Adolescent Girls		t-values	
	(N=64)		(N=64)		(df=126)	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Social	16.41	4.81	13.96	4.38	5.53	<.01
Democratic	17.95	4.62	14.05	4.42	4.81	<.01
Economic	18.11	4.45	13.98	4.54	5.23	<.01
Knowledge	18.25	4.49	14.16	4.62	5.05	<.01
Power	17.94	4.38	13.10	4.39	6.29	<.01
Health	18.50	4.65	13.98	4.44	5.58	<.01

It is clear from results table 03 that Sex-difference has significant influence on the growth and development of personal values namely social value, democratic value, economic value, knowledge value, power value and health value respectively. Adolescent boys excelled in social (Mean =18.41), democratic (Mean =17.95), economic (Mean =18.11), Knowledge (Mean =18.25), Power (Mean =17.94) and health (Mean =18.50) values respectively. The means of adolescents girls for social (Mean =13.96), democratic (Mean =14.05), economic (Mean = 13.98), knowledge (Mean = 14.16), power (Mean =13.10) and health (Mean =13.98) values respectively. The means difference was found significant for social value (t= 5.53; df= 126; P<.01), democratic value (t=4.81; df=126; P<.01), economic value (t=5.23; df= 126; P<.01) knowledge value (t=5.05; df= 126; P<.01) power value (t=6.28; df= 126; P<.01) and health value (t=5.58; df=126; P<.01) respectively. Adolescent boys often excel over girls in social democratic, economic knowledge, power, health, and related personal values due to greater exposure to public discourse, encouragement toward leadership roles, and freedom in decision-making. Boys are typically socialized to be assertive, independent, and competitive traits aligned with power and economic awareness. They may also have more access to health resources and autonomy in managing their well-being. In contrast, girls are often guided toward nurturing or relational roles, which may limit emphasis on these domains.

Table 04: t-table showing the differential effect of Sex-Difference on patterns of adjustment between adolescent boys and girls

Sex-difference						
Dimensions of Adjustment	Adolescent boys (N=64)		Adolescent Girls (N=64)		t-value (df=126) P	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Home	9.06	3.96	13.10	4.24	5.53	<.01
Health	8.51	4.25	13.23	4.50	6.13	<.01
Social	8.60	4.57	13.68	4.69	6.19	<.01
Emotional or Personal	8.72	4.80	13.09	4.50	5.33	<.01
Overall	34.89	9.93	53.10	9.89	10.41	<.01

It is clear from the results table-04 that adolescent boys and adolescent girls differ significantly in terms of home, health, Social, emotional/ personal and overall dimension of adjustment. It is clear from the table that adolescent girls experience more problem in home (Mean =13.10), health (Mean =13.23), social (Mean =13.68), emotional (Mean =13.09) including overall dimensions (Mean = 34.89) of adjustment. The boys comparatively showed healthier adjustment in home (Mean =9.06), health (Mean =8.51) social (Mean =8.60), emotional (Mean =8.72) and overall adjustment (Mean = 53.10) dimensions. The difference of means between adolescent boys and girls differ significantly in home ($t=5.53$; $df=126$; $P<.01$), health ($t=6.13$; $df=126$; $P<.01$), Social ($t=6.19$; $df=126$; $P<.01$), emotional ($t=5.33$; $df=398$; $P<.01$) adjustments including overall adjustment ($t=10.41$; $df=126$; $p<.01$) respectively. Adolescent boys often exhibit better home, health, social, emotional, and overall adjustment patterns than adolescent girls due to a combination of socio-cultural and psychological factors. In many societies, boys receive greater autonomy, encouragement, and freedom of expression, which enhances self-confidence and coping skills. They are also less restricted in social participation and physical activity, supporting better health and social adjustment. Girls, in contrast, frequently face higher academic, familial, and social expectations, along with gender-based constraints and safety concerns, which may elevate emotional stress. Additionally, biological factors such as earlier pubertal changes in girls can intensify emotional vulnerability, influencing overall adjustment outcomes.

Conclusions

1. Adolescents girls experience comparatively more family problem, school/college problem, social problem, emotional/personal problem including overall problem than adolescent boys.
2. Adolescent girls excel over adolescent boys in terms of the growth and development of religious, aesthetic, family prestige and hedonistic values.
3. Adolescent boys excel over adolescent girls in the growth and development of social, democratic, economic, knowledge, power and health values respectively.
4. Adolescent girls manifest comparatively poor adjustment in home, health, social, emotional including overall areas of adjustment as compared to adolescent boys.

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