

# Personality of Middle Age Children as Related to Parent Child Relationship

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## ABSTRACT

Children between the ages of 6 and 12 are commonly referred to as middle age children. Middle age children or children during their middle childhood years are at a turning point in their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. They can better articulate feelings, frustrations, likes, and dislikes. A child's transition from total physical and psychological dependency to self-sufficiency and independence occurs gradually during these years. However even though the desire for independence and growing individuality move the middle age children into the social world that is a little distant from that of their parents, they still strive to seek parents' acceptance and look up to them for their love, care and support. Therefore parents need to establish an enduring bond or relationship with their middle age children as even now parent-child relationship remains one of the most important and significant relationships in a child's life, having far reaching effects on one's overall personality development. And therefore the present study was designed to examine the personality of middle age children in relation to parent child relationship. For the study a sample of 200 middle age children (6-8 years) and their 200 parents (N = 400) from different schools of Jodhpur city were selected through purposive random sampling. Questionnaires were used by the researcher to obtain the data related to personality of children (Early school personality questionnaire (ES PQ) by J.N. Lal, 1987) and parent child relationship (Family relationship scale by Alka David (1997)). The findings of the study indicated that in most families in the selected sample parents share either an excellent (43%) or good (35%) relation with their middle age children. Furthermore the results indicated that most of the personality factors of children were significantly related to the parent child relationship exhibiting the importance of the relationship shared by the parents with their middle age children.

**Key Words :** Middle age children/Middle childhood, Personality and parent-child relationship

## INTRODUCTION

The middle childhood years (ages 6-12) are a unique developmental time when children undergo critical physical, cognitive, and social changes. During this time, children enter formal school, and their social context broadens beyond their families and parents. Ideally, middle childhood gives children the opportunity to develop competencies, interests, and a healthy sense of confidence that they can master and control their worlds (Eccles, 1999). This transition of the child from total emotional, physical and psychological dependency to self-sufficiency can be quite overwhelming as well as stressful and a

confusing time for both the middle age children and their parents who seek to support their healthy development. There are many factors and changes in a child's life during this phase that contributes to his/her ability to succeed and develop positively thereby affecting their overall personality development. The first big change that parents and their children in middle childhood face is that middle age children spend around half as much time with their parents as they do in early childhood, while the time they spend with other children and alone increases significantly. They move into expanding roles, environments and as they experience this ever widening social arena, middle age children begin to develop their

own identity and demand more independence, autonomy and freedom. However of the many different relationships formed over the course of the life span, the relationship between parent and child still remains the most important one (Steinberg, 2001), making it one of the most important aspects having immense influence on the overall personality development of a middle age child. As parents and the environment at home still plays a major role in providing the congenial atmosphere within which the child forms his personality, security within the family and encouragement by the parents is quite important for a child to develop a sense of worth and belongingness which helps the child to handle problems encountered outside house more positively and effectively.

The beginning of middle childhood years is often regarded as the "age of reason" (Rogoff *et al.*, 1975). Children are assumed to develop new capabilities at this age and are assigned new roles and responsibilities in their families and social surroundings, to which they need to live up to. A middle age child's conscience begins to mature enough to guide their actions. They have made up their minds about what is right or wrong, identifying with their parents' expressed values and applying them quite rigidly. But still they strive to seek parents' acceptance and feel the need to be associated with them. There have been researches that have revealed that a loving, responsive, and helpful parent who is always available for their child serves the function of binding the child to them and contributes to the reciprocal dynamics of that binding (Bowlby, 1988) which then creates an environment that nurtures the child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development leading to a more positive overall personality development. Children who grow with a secure and healthy attachment to their parents stand a better chance of developing happy and content relationships with others in their life. The kind of relationship a parent and a child share during these years also affects the social adjustments outside the home. Favorable parent-child relationship leads to better children's social adjustment to people outside home than when the parent-child relationships are stressful. During this phase of transition, children may persist on a positive or negative developmental course, or the transition may provide a unique opportunity for their trajectory to be altered (Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, 2000). Concurrent and longitudinal researches have shown that negativity and conflict in the parent/provider-child relationship are indicative of problematic behaviors outside home during

this period (Peisner-Feinberg *et al.*, 2001). Therefore it is quite imperative for the parents to develop a positive and a healthy bond with their middle age children thereby helping them develop a positive personality and behavior.

Therefore the present study attempted to trace the relationship between personality of middle age children and parent child relationship. The study also attempted to assess the relationship between Indian parents and their middle age children. Thus, by examining the relationship between personality of children and parent child relationship, we may have a better understanding of the needs and requirements of middle age children as they enter this new world, which would help parents to guide and nurture their children in a more appropriate way as they grow thereby combating the negative influences that their child might face in this new phase of their life and help them develop better personality.

#### **Review of literature :**

Horstman *et al.* (2016) stated that the parent-child relationship is one of the most influential, important, and meaningful relationships in an individual's life. The communication between parents and children fuels their bond and functions to socialize children (*i.e.*, gender, career and work, relationship values and skills, and health behaviors), provide social support, show affection, make sense of their life experiences, engage in conflict, manage private information, and create a family communication environment.

A research on "Influence of Parenting Style on Children's Behaviour" was done by Sarwar (2016). This research determined the influence of parents and their parenting styles (which determine the parent child relationship) on children's behavior. The author examined different parenting styles to understand which style leads the children to be juvenile delinquency that ultimately makes the children low academic achievers. The findings revealed that authoritarian parenting style leads the children to become rebellious and adopt problematic behavior due to more than necessary power exercised on children by parents. In contrast, authoritative parenting style was found to be effective for children, as it encourages moderate parenting style wherein parents provide guidance to their children on issue oriented and rational matters and the level of demand is high, along with effective communication which builds effective relationship between the child and the parents.

Mishra *et al.* (2015) concluded in their research that

the quality of the parent–child relationship, along the dimensions of perceived care and psychological control, may have short and long-term consequences for positive mental well-being of children. These results indicate that relationships with fathers and mothers which are supportive, affectionate and allow the child appropriate autonomy may promote good psychological functioning across life up to and including the seventh decade.

Pagani *et al.* (2010) examined the relationship between middle childhood trajectories of family dysfunction and indirect aggression. Family systems, developmental psychopathology and life-course conceptualization were applied to meet the objective. For both boys and girls prolonged duration of high doses of family dysfunction was associated with the most extreme developmental trajectories of indirect aggression during middle childhood. Results showed gender specificity with respect to the influence of the explanatory variables on family dysfunction. For girls, the link between family dysfunction and indirect aggression persisted above and beyond such contextual influences. For boys, the relationship became unimportant once contextual factors were taken into account.

Gupta and Vohra (2010) studied about “Parent-child relationship and psycho- Physical Health”. The objective of the study was to examine the effect of parent-child relationship upon the psychological, Physical and Total (Physical and psychological) health of female adolescents. The sample consisted of 100 female undergraduates, and it was concluded in the study that if mothers are indifferent towards their children, it hampers the physical growth of the child and if father were demanding, it affects the psychological as well as physical health of the child.

Ranson and Urichuk (2008) reviewed “The effect of parent–child attachment relationships on child biopsychosocial outcomes: a review” and concluded that the literature supports the intuitive belief that parent–child attachment representations affect infant and child development in a variety of domains and across several developmental periods. They also stated that there is substantial evidence that children with secure attachments in childhood develop more positive social–emotional competence, cognitive functioning, physical health and mental health, whereas children with insecure attachments are more at risk for negative outcomes in these domains.

### **Objectives :**

The following objectives were laid down for the

present study

1. To assess the relationship between Indian parents and their middle age children.
2. To correlate the personality of children and parent child relationship.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research design :**

For this study, the researcher employed descriptive research as it is an investigation effort to explore and describe the relationship between personality of middle age (6-8 years) children and parent child relationship.

### **Locale of the study :**

The present study was conducted in the primary schools lying within the municipal limits of Jodhpur city, Rajasthan.

### **Sampling :**

A total sample of 400, 200 middle age children (sample A) and 200 parents (sample B), fulfilling the criteria required for the present study was selected through purposive random sampling for the present study.

### **Tools used:**

- Early school personality questionnaire (ESPQ) by J. N. Lal (1987)
- Family relationship scale by Alka David (1997)

### **Procedure of data collection:**

After identifying the schools, the principals of the schools were contacted and the purpose of the study was explained. With their due consent the researcher by using the random purposive sampling identified the subjects. Then according to their convenience, the subjects were tested on various tools in school and at home after establishing a good rapport with them. For collecting the data subjects were called in small groups consisting of 25 to 30 subjects. All the participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and they were assured complete confidentiality. Then they were instructed orally and in written form about how to respond to each scale. Appropriate time was given to all the participants to complete the questionnaires. After completion of the tests the filled up inventories were collected and the subjects were thanked profusely for their cooperation.

**Result analysis:**

A detailed data sheet was prepared in excel and transferred to SPSS program for statistical analysis after in-depth scrutiny of the filled up inventories. Appropriate statistical analysis was be done wherein

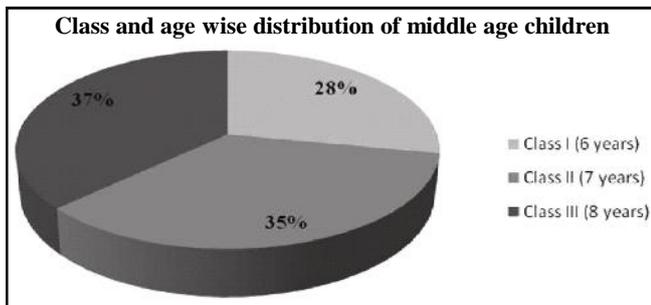
- a) Measures of central tendency and
- b) Correlation between the different variables under study was calculated with the help of recent version of SPSS program.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Demographic distribution of the sample:**

Table 1 and Fig. 1 shows the age and class wise distribution of the middle age children. 37% and 35% of middle age children that were randomly selected for the research were 8 years and 7 years old, respectively whereas 28% of children from class I were around 6 years old. The entire sample of 200 children was equally divided on gender in order to avoid any sort of gender biasness in the result of the current research.

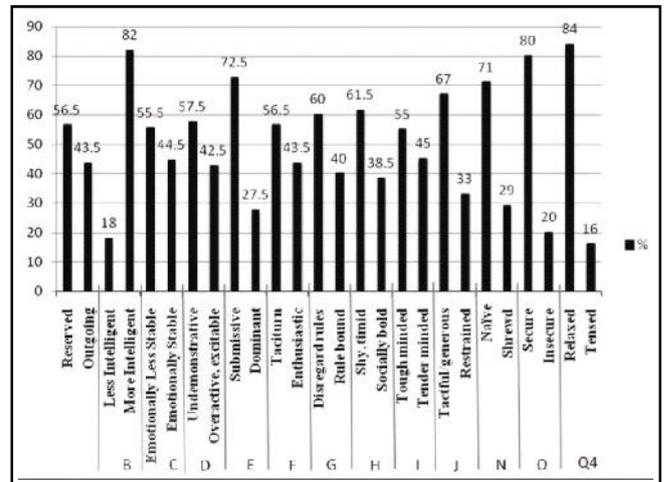
| Class and Age       | N   | %      |
|---------------------|-----|--------|
| Class I (6 years)   | 56  | 28.00  |
| Class II (7 years)  | 70  | 35.00  |
| Class III (8 years) | 74  | 37.00  |
| Total               | 200 | 100.00 |



**Fig. 1 : Class and age wise distribution of children**

The Table 2 and Fig. 2 depicting the percentage for each personality factor of the entire sample of middle age children reveals that 56.50% have scored low (reserved) and 43.50% high (outgoing) on factor A with a mean and SD of 3.95 and 1.25, respectively.

On factor B, 18% have scored low and 82% have scored high with a mean and SD of 6.21 and 1.50, respectively, revealing that more than half of the entire sample falls into the category of high scholastic mental



**Fig. 2 : Percentage of various personality factors (ESPO) of children**

capacity.

On factor C, 55.50% have scored low and 44.50% high with a mean and SD of 3.93 and 1.57, respectively depicting that most of the middle age children have low ego strength making them emotionally less stable as compared to the rest.

On factor D, 57.50% have scored low and 42.50% high, revealing that most of the children are of either phlegmatic temperament or are undemonstrative as compared to being overly excitable or overactive. The mean and SD for factor D was found to be 4.06 and 1.36, respectively.

On factor E, 72.50% have scored low and 27.50% have scored high with a mean and SD of 2.44 and 1.75, respectively depicting that most of the children are submissive, mild and accommodating as compared to the 27.50% who have scored high on factor E making them more dominant and aggressive.

On factor F, 56.50% have scored low and 43.50% high with a mean and SD of 2.86 and 1.15, respectively, revealing that almost equal number of middle age children are sober, prudent/serious and impulsive, lively or happy go lucky.

On factor G, 60% have scored low and 40% have scored high with a mean and SD of 3.42 and 1.54, respectively, depicting that most of the middle age children have weaker superego strength and evades rule as compared to the 40% who have scored high on the factor G making them more perseverant and rule bound.

On factor H, 61.50% have scored low and 38.50% high, revealing that most of the children are shy and timid

**Table 2: Distribution of personality factors (ESPD) of children**

| Factors | Personality                         | N   | %     | Mean | SD   |
|---------|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|------|------|
| A       | Reserved (low score)                | 113 | 56.50 | 3.95 | 1.25 |
|         | Outgoing (high score)               | 87  | 43.50 |      |      |
| B       | Less Intelligent (low score)        | 36  | 18.00 | 6.21 | 1.50 |
|         | More Intelligent (high score)       | 164 | 82.00 |      |      |
| C       | Emotionally Less Stable (low score) | 111 | 55.50 | 3.93 | 1.57 |
|         | Emotionally Stable (high score)     | 89  | 44.50 |      |      |
| D       | Undemonstrative (low score)         | 115 | 57.50 | 4.06 | 1.36 |
|         | Overactive, excitable (high score)  | 85  | 42.50 |      |      |
| E       | Submissive (low score)              | 145 | 72.50 | 2.44 | 1.75 |
|         | Dominant (high score)               | 55  | 27.50 |      |      |
| F       | Taciturn (low score)                | 113 | 56.50 | 2.86 | 1.15 |
|         | Enthusiastic (high score)           | 87  | 43.50 |      |      |
| G       | Disregard rules (low score)         | 120 | 60.00 | 3.42 | 1.54 |
|         | Rule bound (high score)             | 80  | 40.00 |      |      |
| H       | Shy, timid (low score)              | 123 | 61.50 | 3.41 | 1.44 |
|         | Socially bold (high score)          | 77  | 38.50 |      |      |
| I       | Tough minded (low score)            | 110 | 55.00 | 3.45 | 1.19 |
|         | Tender minded (high score)          | 90  | 45.00 |      |      |
| J       | Tactful/generous (low score)        | 134 | 67.00 | 2.51 | 1.30 |
|         | Restrained (high score)             | 66  | 33.00 |      |      |
| N       | Naïve (low score)                   | 142 | 71.00 | 2.51 | 1.21 |
|         | Shrewd (high score)                 | 58  | 29.00 |      |      |
| O       | Secure (low score)                  | 140 | 80.00 | 2.72 | 1.81 |
|         | Insecure (high score)               | 60  | 20.00 |      |      |
| Q4      | Relaxed (low score)                 | 168 | 84.00 | 3.62 | 1.08 |
|         | Tensed (high score)                 | 32  | 16.00 |      |      |

rather than being socially bold and spontaneous. The mean and SD for factor H was found to be 3.41 and 1.44, respectively.

On factor I, 55% have scored low making them tough minded as compared to the rest 45% who scored high on factor I making them tender minded (mean and SD - 3.45 and 1.19, respectively).

On factor J, 67% have scored low and 33% high with a mean and SD of 2.51 and 1.30, respectively, revealing that most of the children are zestful/generous rather than being individualistic and internally restrained.

On factor N, 71% have scored low and 29% have scored high with a mean and SD of 2.51 and 1.21, respectively, indicating that majority of children during middle childhood years tend to be naïve and sentimental rather than being shrewd and calculative.

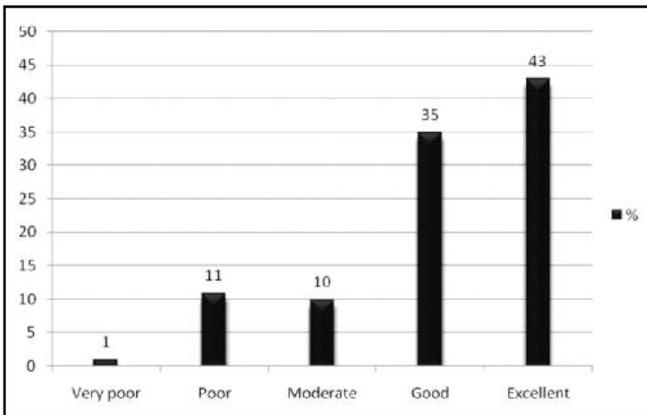
On factor O, 80% have scored low making them more secure, confident and placid and 20% were such who were quite insecure. The mean and SD for factor O was found to be 2.72 and 1.81, respectively.

On factor Q4, 84% have scored low and 16% high with a mean and SD of 3.95 and 1.25, respectively exhibiting that most of the children fall into the low category making them quite tranquil and relaxed as compared to being frustrated or tensed.

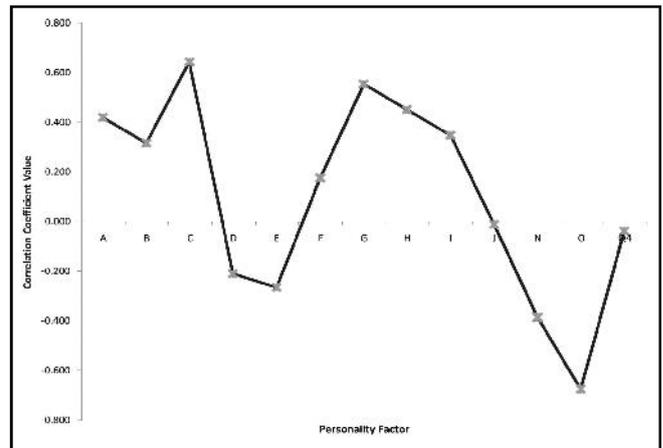
The Table 3 and Fig. 3 depicting the distribution of parent child relationship helps in understanding the kind of relationship middle age children share with their parents in the sample under study. From the figures it can be concluded that majority of children share either an excellent (43%) or good (35%) relationship with their

**Table 3 : Distribution of parent child relationship for the entire sample**

| Parent-Child Relationship | N   | %      |
|---------------------------|-----|--------|
| Very poor                 | 2   | 1.00   |
| Poor                      | 22  | 11.00  |
| Moderate                  | 20  | 10.00  |
| Good                      | 70  | 35.00  |
| Excellent                 | 86  | 43.00  |
| Total                     | 200 | 100.00 |



**Fig. 3 : Percentage of respondents according to parent child relationship**



**Fig. 4 : Correlation between parent-child relationship and personality factors**

parents. Hardly 10% of children had a moderate parent child relationship whereas there were just 11% and 1% of children who had either poor or very poor relationship with their parents.

The Table 4 and Fig. 4 depicting the correlation between parent child relationship and different personality factors (ESPQ) explains how parent child relationship positively or negatively affects the personality of middle age children. Personality factors A, B, C, F, G, H and I were found to be positively related and factor D, E, N and O were found to be negatively related to parent child relationship. However parent child relationship was not found to be significantly related to personality factor J and Q4. Therefore it can be concluded that children who

share an excellent or good relationship with their parents are more outgoing, intelligent, emotionally stable, obedient, happy go lucky, tender minded, confident, rule bound and sentimental whereas children who do not share a good relationship with their parents or have a poor/very poor parent child relationship are reserved, emotionally less stable, impatient, aggressive, insecure, depressive and less intelligent. These results confirm findings from previous research by Agarwal and Mishra (2005) who studied the impact of parent-child relationship on self confidence of students wherein these two variables were found to be significantly related conveying that higher the parent child relationship quality, better the self confidence of the child. Lalfamkima *et al.* (2005) also reported in their study on Intelligence and academic achievement in relation to Parent- child relationship that children raised in permissive/loving environment leading to good parent child relationship were more intelligent than the children being raised in restrictive environment.

Compatible results were reported by Bhagat and Baliya (2016) in their study wherein high quality of parent-child relationship was found to be positively associated with emotional, social and educational adjustment in children. A study conducted by Theo, Veerman and Verhulst (2004) on Dutch children, aged 4 to 18 years also reported that mental health issues were most in families that exercised poor parent-child communication or had a weak/poor bond. These children demonstrated anxiety concerns, depression and increased social hostility. Vaghela, R. and Dhila, B. D. (2014) also found that there exist both positive and negative correlations of the parent-child relationships with the emotional maturity

| Table 4 : Correlation between parent-child relationship and personality factors |  |
|---|--|
| Factors   | Correlation with Overall Parent child relationship (r) |
| A   | 0.418 ***  |
| B   | 0.314 ***  |
| C   | 0.642 ***  |
| D   | -0.210 **  |
| E   | -0.265 ***   |
| F   | 0.175 *  |
| G   | 0.553 ***  |
| H   | 0.449 ***  |
| I   | 0.347 ***  |
| J   | -0.012 NS  |
| N   | -0.386 ***   |
| O   | -0.675 ***   |
| Q4  | -0.038 NS  |

\*\*\* correlation significant at 0.001 level,

\*\* correlation significant at 0.01 level

\* correlation significant at 0.05 level

of children. Andrea Kinghorn (2011) too stated that when parent relationship quality is high, their families and children have better outcomes.

Therefore it can be concluded that out of various factors that influence the personality of children, parent child relationship is one such factor that immensely influences the overall personality development of children. And middle childhood years being few of the most crucial or the vulnerable years that centers on children's developing social and emotional worlds, are affected a lot with the kind of relationship parents and children share during this period.

### Conclusion :

Thus, concisely it can be concluded that a good/ healthy parent child relationship does promote a positive personality development of children and as the world of middle age children expands they face an increasingly complex array of issues, thereby making it very important for the parents to understand them well and to help the child lay a foundation of his/her learning so that they get along with the new and changing ways of life. The results will also hopefully be conducive for learning the appropriate ways of dealing with the unique personality traits of the middle age children by the concerned authorities specially parents and help them navigate this critical period more smoothly.

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