



# Parenting Style of Father and its Implication on Empathy in Adolescence – A systematic Review)

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**Abstract:** The importance and impact of paternal parenting in an adolescent's holistic development, even though is gaining recognition, the data related to this area of research is scarce. During the last decade, social research focused their attention to this domain, but most of those studies were limited to children. Prosocial behaviour in adolescents has been widely studied but only a few have been in the relation with paternal parenting. Despite all these drawbacks, there have been certain studies that focused on the relationship between father and teen and how this relationship impacts empathy in their adolescence. This manuscript highlights studies that focus on paternal parenting and its implication on adolescent's empathy using previously published literature of the last two decades, aiming to provide a structure to the broad theme of paternal parenting and the component of empathy.

**IndexTerms – Paternal Parenting, Maternal Parenting, Adolescence, Empathy**

## INTRODUCTION

The Indian culture has been powered with the relationship of mother with her children. There has always been very little light on how a paternal figure impacts a child's overall growth and their holistic development. However, from the last 2-3 decades, the social sciences have begun recognizing and examining the crucial role that fathers play in child development and family dynamics. There is no denying that father's presence plays a vital role in psychological development of adolescents in numerous ways (Ying et al., 2021). His involvement is further associated with positive child health outcomes and is positively correlated with parental well-being (Krishnakumar and Black, 204). The involvement of parents exerts a strong presence in the lives of adolescents. It is anticipated that parents have less influence with the adolescent as compared to children. Adolescents might be less receptive towards their parents in their teen years, but it does not imply that parental figures do not impact the choices of their wards. Parents have varied styles that encompass techniques such as self-disclosure, persuasion, unconditional positive regard, negligence, motivation, supervision, discipline, commitment, love, and empathy.

There has always been dynamic play between the two genders from the time immemorial. How are boys and girls different from one another in their adolescence years? There have been ample studies that have indicated that the two genders vary not only in the physical spectrum, but there are also variations observed in cognitive, social, and emotional development as well. Prosocial development which primarily includes empathy, sympathy, and interpersonal relationships. According to a study by Carlo et al., 2015, boys attain prosocial development between the age of 14-17, whereas girls attain it relatively earlier.

Empathy is a powerful tool; however, it appears to be a questionable construct as it is subjective in nature. Empathy is the power of entering into another's personality and imaginatively experiencing his experiences. Empathy is a multidimensional construct comprising cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions and has been advanced as a critical predictor of prosocial behaviour and effectiveness in the workplace (Clark et al., 2019). Cognitive empathy refers to the tendency to understand or the state of understanding others' internal states (i.e., thoughts and affective states). Affective empathy or feeling the same affective state as another person is thought to be the phylogenetically earliest system of (Olderbak et al., 2014). Cognitive empathy is thought to develop later than affective empathy after children have acquired specific cognitive skills (Perry et al., 2003). The quality of parenting practices and the parent-child relationship influence the formation of attachment. Parents play a role in helping children's cognitive and social development (Aunola et al., 2015). Empathy can help adolescent to form a foundation for ethical decision making and can help reduce conflict and aggression in future and present relationships.

## NEED OF THE STUDY.

There are multiple studies that have assessed and interpreted father-daughter and mother-son relationships however the relationship of father and son is still widely neglected, specifically in the Indian context. Early years and the bonds with their parents play a very important role in how a child will nurture as an adult and most importantly, the kind of person he will become. The role of father in a male's development is neglected as it is always said that mother is to son and father is to daughter. Recently, it has been seen that involvement of both the parents are equally important and the presence. It has further been seen that that holistic development of a child impacts his/her empathy and the ability to maintain relationships in the later lives of an individual and such prosocial behaviour is evident from adolescence. Sadly, there is scarcity of data that can collaborate such finding with one another.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

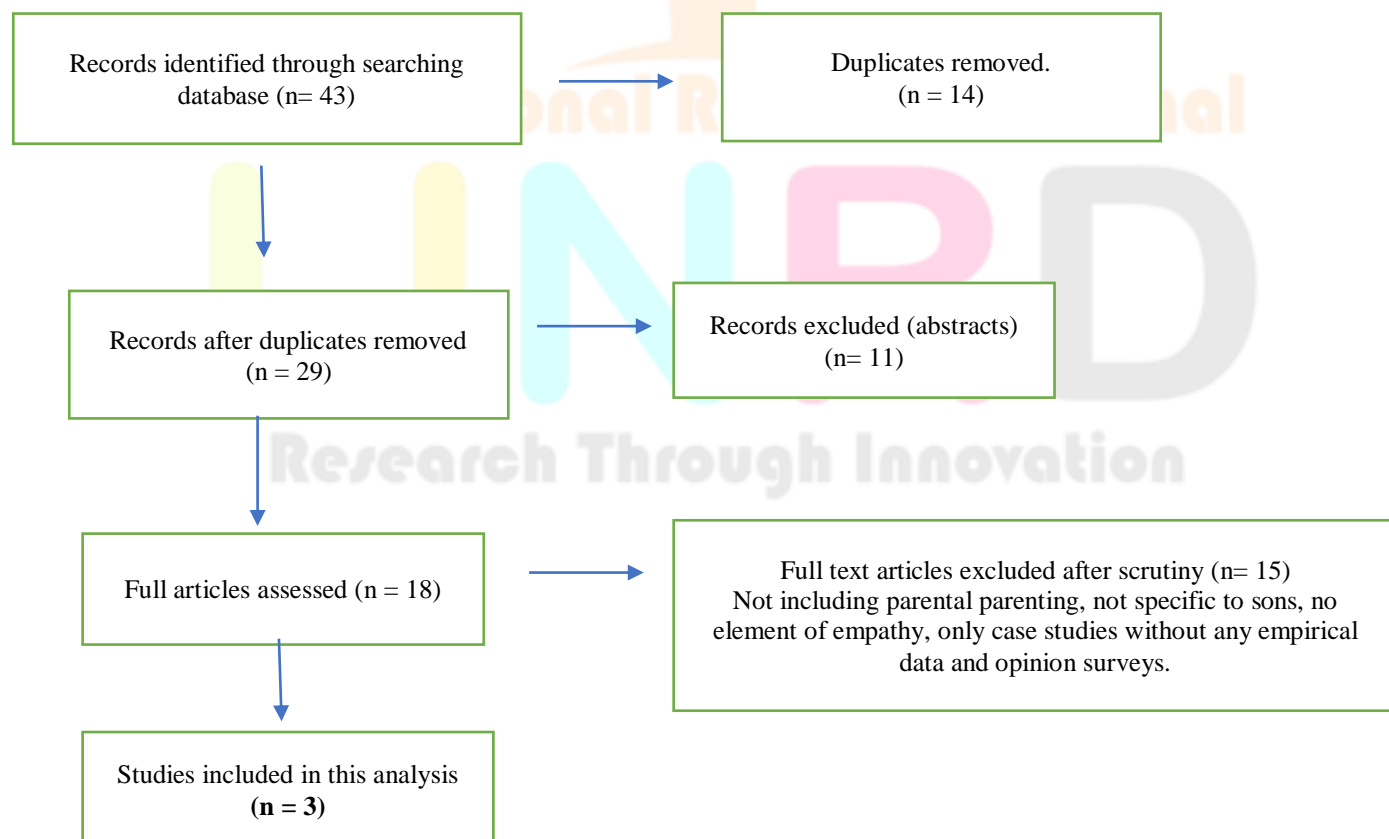
The methodology section outlines the plan and method that how the study is conducted. The details are as follows;

### 3.1 Theoretical framework

A literature search to identify published articles was done with different permutations and combinations of key words and phrases such as, 'parenting style between father and son in his adolescence', 'perceived parenting style between father in adolescence', 'father and adolescent and empathy', 'parenting style between father and adolescent and its implication on empathy', 'empathy and father adolescent relationship', 'Adolescent + father + empathy' and 'understanding empathy from the point of view of parenting style between father and adolescent'. The search terms were kept broad to encompass all possibilities.

A published study was included if it was an original or adaptive study, it had some empirical form of data or intervention, the sample size was: adolescents and it had some form of parental parenting in it, even if it is inclusive of maternal parenting, it was a full paper in English language, and if the study had an element of empathy. Some of the studies were excluded because even if they had paternal parenting and empathy, the sample size was not of adolescents. Only studies that have had all the three inclusion criteria were taken for this review. Data was extracted from the selected articles using a data extraction excel sheet with information on authors, year of study, and country; title of the study; sample profile including sample age; Study/research design; outcome variable and its association in results and analysis, whether original or adapted research; Details of contents and structure; Use of standardized tools and tools description; type of course/training programme, if applicable; outcome assessment and outcome variables; and findings of the study. We considered a total of 16 such indicators as criteria for assessing the quality of the included studies and the total indicator score was calculated in percentage (mentioned in figure 1).

Figure- 1: Study Inclusion Flow chart



### 3.2 Qualitative Assessment

Study/research design, sample size, sampling technique, originality/novelty of research, use of standardized tools and its description of assessment statistics was seen in all the three studies (100%). Status of comparative group, outcome variable and findings related to outcome variable and funding was observed in 1 out of 3 studies (33.3%). Objectives were vividly mentioned in 2 out of 3 studies (66.6%). There was no mention of study design in the title, inclusion-exclusion criteria, feasibility indicators, risk biases and participant's feedback in any of the studies (0%). Further details are given in table 1.

Table 1- : Quality Indicators in Evaluation (N=03)

Checklist No.	Description of Quality Indicators	Frequency & % of Studies Meeting the Quality Indicators
1.	Study design in the title	0 (0%)
2.	Objectives	2 (66.6%)
3.	Study/research design	3 (100%)
4.	Sample size	3 (100%)
5.	Sampling technique	3 (100%)
6.	Inclusion-exclusion criteria	0 (0%)
7.	Status of comparative group	1 (33.33%)
8.	Whether original research	3 (100%)
9.	Use of standardized tools and tools description	3 (100%)
10.	Outcome variables	1 (33.33%)
11.	Feasibility indicators (if it is a feasibility study)	0 (0%)
12.	Description of assessment statistics	3 (100%)
13.	Findings in relation to outcome variables	1 (33.33%)
14.	Risk bias	0 (0%)
15.	Participants' feedback	0 (0%)
16.	Funding	1 (33.33%)

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Results and analysis of selected studies for review

#### 4.1.1 Study Characteristics

1 out of 3 studies was from European countries (Sweden) and the other two were from Asia (Pakistan and China). The range of these three studies was diverse as one study is from 2011, the other is from 2012 and the third one is from 2021, indicative of the fact that conception of parental parenting had become as early as 2010s. another interesting diversification could be seen in the sample size of all the studies which ranged from 3197 – 205. Another reason for the difference between sample size could be the overall population of these countries which is reflected in the sample size. All the studies opted for schools to collect data for their respective research.

#### 4.1.2 Study Design

Study design was mentioned in all the three studies, and these were quantitative studies in nature. All the studies used standardized quantitative measures to assess their hypothesis and aims. None of these studies had the component of intervention in it. However, the study by Marta Miklikowska, 2011 was longitudinal in nature and the participants were assessed cross sectionally over the course of 2 years in three different waves. The study by Arzeen et al., 2012 had two groups in their original study: control group (emotionally non empathetic adolescents) and experimental (emotionally empathetic adolescents) group. Sample size and sampling technique was mentioned in all the studies. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were not mentioned categorically in any of the study.

#### 4.1.3 Broad Theme of Paternal Parenting

The relationship between a father and son can shape the son's perception of what it means to be an adult and how to interact and behave with others. The role of father cannot be replaced by mother, specifically in the psychological development of a child (Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). All the studies emphasized on the scarcity of studies of empathy and its correlation to parenting in adolescents as most of the studies are directed towards children (Fabes et al., 1999). Furthermore, it was hypothesised that there will be a difference in the parenting children of mother and father corresponding to which they might foster different aspects of empathy on their adolescent (Wang et al., 2021). Not only does the gender of parents play a pivotal role, the gender of child is also equally important in assessing empathy and other prosocial behaviours. It has been further suggested that child rearing behaviours and activities are significantly impacted by cultural norms and gender stereotypes (Coltrane, 1998; Turner 1993, Hasting et al., 2005).

#### 4.1.4 The impact on Empathy

Adolescence is a very crucial period for empathy development and other prosocial behaviours. The multidimensional approach to empathy tries to distinguish between affective and cognitive components of empathy (Davis, 1983). The studies in the past have primarily focused to examine the different possibility of bidirectional relations between perceived parenting and dimensions of empathy, such that empathy characteristics might also affect adolescent's perception of their parents. Individuals who tend to think that their fathers are supportive of them have a higher level of perception of oneself and one's empathy (Antonopoulou, Alexopoulos, & Maridaki-Kassotaki, 2012). An emotionally warm father and other family sub-systems that support the father-son

relationship will create a harmonious and interactive atmosphere whereas parenting practices that lack warmth can have negative impact on adolescent's empathy.

#### 4.1.5 Outcome Variables and Impact of Courses and Programs

Outcome variable and its categorical relationship to the outcome and analysis was seen in just one study out of three. Description and analysis of quantitative statistics was seen in all the studies. There was no mention of risk bias or participant's feedback in any of the study. Funding was mentioned in one of three studies. Only one study mentioned the course which was a longitudinal study which went for 2 years and was administered in three waves. The other two studies were cross sectional studies.

#### 4.1.6 Cultural Differences

Ironically, the studies from Asian hemisphere (Arzeen et al., 2012 and Ying et al., 2021) focused on solely father presence and paternal parenting, however, the study from the European hemisphere (Marta et al., 2011) focused on both maternal and paternal parenting. Apart from this no significant other differences could also be established on the basis of culture. This itself gives scope for further qualitative analysis with paternal figure and his influence on the child's life which could be made culturally enriched as well.

#### 4.1.6 Gender differences

There was no categorical distinction provided by any study that distinguishes between the genders of adolescent.

**TABLE-2: Characteristics of Studies Included**

S.	Author, Title, and Country	Sample	Scales Used	Type of study design	Duration of Study and Analysis	Results
1	Arzeen et al., 2012 Perception of Parental Acceptance and Rejection in Emotionally Empathic and non-Empathic Adolescents. (Pakistan)	N = 205	Emotional Empathy Scale and Parental Acceptance and Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ)	None	The two groups comprising of 68 emotionally empathic and 68 non-empathic adolescents were identified on the basis of percentiles below 33rd and above 67th percentile of the total sample on the Emotional Empathy Scale (EES).	The results indicated that emotionally empathic adolescents significantly differed from non-empathic adolescents on all the dimension of PARQ. Also, non-empathic adolescents perceived their fathers more neglecting as compared to their mothers.
2	Marta Miklikowska, 2011 Family Roots of Empathy: Related Characteristics and Role of Perceived Maternal and Paternal Need Support in Adolescence (Sweden)	1st phase (N = 678) 2nd Phase (N = 570) and 3rd phase (N = 549)	A. The Responsiveness/Warmth Scale B. The Autonomy-Support Scale C. The Psychological	None	2 years of Longitudinal Study conducted in 3 waves. Analysis of the covariance matrices using LISREL solution generated on the basis of maximum likelihood estimation. To evaluate model fit, they	Results suggest divergent and unique influence of maternal and paternal need support, with maternal need support is important for the development of empathetic concern and paternal need support is important for the development of perspective taking abilities. Positive associations were found between



			Control – Scale Youth Self-Report		inspected the Satorra –Bentler scaled chi-sqaure along with comparative fit index (CFI) and the Standardized Root Mean Square (SRMR).	Perceived need supportive parenting and Adolescent empathetic characteristics.
3	Ying et al., 2021 The superiority of high level of father presence on empathy and sympathy early adolescents in south-east China: A person-centred perspective. (China)	N = 3197 Girls = 15 And B = 1613	A. Brief version of Chinese re Father Presence Questionnaire B. 12-item Chinese ve the Adolescent Measure of Empathy and Sympathy (CAMES)	None	MANOVA and post hoc tests (Bonferroni) to analyze the characteristics of empathy and sympathy in different potential p father presence	Father presence's potential profiles can be divided into four profiles (Low, Moderate, High father \ presence, and Balanced type). These profiles share a similar pattern and characteristics among boys and girls. A high level of father presence shows a particular superiority in the level of cognitive empathy, affective empathy, and sympathy. The “Balanced type” showed the most significant advantage in affective empathy, which brings enlightenment to improving the consistency between various father-related factors.

**4.2 Discussion**

Research shows that mothers invest more in emotional closeness with their daughters than with their sons and subsequently fathers are seen rewarding “masculine” cognitive and instrumental abilities in their sons (Dunn et al., 1987; Kochanska, 1997; Lamb & Lewis, 2010; Larson & Richards, 1994; Milevsky et al., 2007, Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Power & Shanks, 1989). Children are more likely to identify with and model the behavior of the same-sex parent which was also postulated by Sigmund Freud in his pathbreaking theory of psychoanalysis (Belle, 1989; Eisenberg et al., 1996; Hastings et al., 2005; Maccoby, 2003; Perry & Bussey, 1979). Given these findings, it seems important to examine whether the parenting–empathy relation depends on the gender of parent and/or adolescent and whether these effects differ across dimensions of empathy. Such an approach allows us to address the possible bidirectional character of parent–adolescent relations (Cummings & Schermerhorn, 2004; Kerr & Stattin, 2003). Perceived maternal need support predicted changes in empathic concern in daughters only whereas perceived paternal need support consistently had a positive effect on changes in perspective taking among both sons and daughters. Perceived maternal need support was predictive for empathic concern among daughters only is in line with other findings indicating that child gender may moderate the differential role of fathers and mothers in social development (Larson and Richards, 1994; Youniss and Smollar, 1985; Zahn and Waxler, 2000). Adolescents may be accustomed or habituated to different aspects of socialization, with girls being more inclined towards the socialization of moral emotions observed from mother and boys being more susceptible to the socialization of cognitive and moral behavior, observed from father and hence might be more likely to identify with and model the behavior of the same-sex parent which is so deeply enrooted in the consciousness (Morris et al., 2007). Theoretically and based on several research it is been postulated that parents may feel more responsible for the upbringing of the child of their own gender (Eisenberg & McNally, 1993; Harris & Morgan, 1991). Researchers have further argued that mother–daughter relations are closer, more emotional, and hence more likely to be influential than any of the other dyadic relations (Hastings, McShane, et al., 2007; Hofferth et al., 2007; Phares, Fields, & Kamboukos, 2009). Father’s companionship can promote

improvement in the regulation of emotions and play the role of a collaborator in child's developmental microsystem. (Gregory et al., 2019). Father's presence extends beyond physical and fiscal boundaries to emotional relations with children (Johnson, 1996). Although father presence encompasses affective, behavioral, and cognitive elements, emotional accessibility is one of primary components of the expressive dimension (Cuplin et al., 2020). Physical proximity is an important element in the development of child and his/her feelings towards their parents. If a child does not have any contact, it might be difficult to build a meaningful relationship. Interestingly, the relationship between the mother and the father and the mother's support for the relationship between the father and the son also play a very crucial role in the relationship between father and son (Yogman and Eppel., 2022). The mother's attitude towards the father can directly affect how the child perceives the father. If mother and father have a cordial, intimate (even if the relationship is not romantic) relationship with one another, father is more likely to have an intimate connection with the child (Harris, 2002). Mutual trust and respect between parents seem to be the building block for a child. Thirdly, in terms of family intergenerational relations, how the father has been born and brought up by his father determines to a certain degree the relationship between him and his child (Jinqun Shi, 2017). This might not always be true as some fathers, disliking the way they were brought up, might choose an entirely different form of parenting for their ward. Father presence's potential profiles can be divided into four profiles (Low, Moderate, High father presence, and Balanced type). These profiles share a similar pattern and characteristics among both the genders i.e boys and girls. A high level of father presence shows a particular superiority in the level of cognitive empathy, affective empathy, and sympathy. The "Balanced type" showed the most significant benefit in affective empathy, which is also attributed to bring enlightenment to improving the consistency between various father-related factors. Parental relationship with children has frequently been conceptualized in terms of interaction between two sets of parental attributes i.e., parental warmth /acceptance and rejection. These dimensions help us explain the diverse ways in which parents can bring up their children and how their behavior foster positive feelings in the child, thus promoting normal social development. Barnett (1987) proposed that the development of empathy is most likely to occur in a family environment that (a) satisfies the child's own emotional needs and discourages excessive self-concern, (b) encourages the child to experience and express a broad range of emotions, and (c) provides opportunities for the child to observe and interact with others who encourage emotional sensitivity and responsiveness. One parental variable that seems to fit well into Barnett's (1987) criterion for the socialization of empathy is parental warmth. Similarly, Allport (1961) argued that the basis of empathic ability includes a secure home environment. Children, who come from the permissive family environment, are more tolerant and empathic in comparison to those children who come from the harsh/controlling or submissive/neglecting families. Emotionally empathic adolescents are more prone to perceive their fathers and mothers warmer as compared to non-empathic adolescents. Emotionally empathic adolescents have perceived their fathers and mothers less aggressive as compared to non-empathic adolescents. Results show that emotionally empathic adolescents perceived both their father and mother as equally warm, aggressive, neglecting, and rejecting. The only significant difference is in the perception of parental neglect.

#### 4.3 Conclusion

The more fathers are perceived to provide need and support, their adolescents are more likely to develop empathic skills. Maternal need support being important for the development of empathic concern and paternal need support being important for the development of perspective-taking abilities with results suggesting divergent and unique influences of maternal and paternal need support. Study provides initial evidence for the existence of bidirectional relations between parenting and adolescents' empathic abilities. The results of this study showed that the empathy and sympathy in early Chinese adolescents differed significantly in different potential profiles of father presence. The "High father presence" group showed a particular advantage in the levels of cognitive empathy, affective empathy, and sympathy over the moderate and low counterparts. It indicates that non-empathic adolescents tend to perceive their fathers more neglecting as compared to their mothers. The affectionate, loving, responsive relationship of parents with their children, promote the empathy in them in later year of life. Whereas aggressive, rejecting, neglecting behavior of parents toward their children in early years of life, always appears to be related with those behavior, which are not socially approved.

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#### II. DECLARATIONS

**Ethical Approval** – Not Applicable

**Competing interests** - None

**Funding** – None

**Availability of data and materials** – Not Applicable

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