



GENDER DIFFERENTIATED PARENTING

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Abstract: Parental differential treatment on the basis of gender of the child is referred as gender differentiated parenting. This paper aims to examine the aspects of gender differentiated parenting among the present (parents of school-age children) and the previous generation (grandparents of school-age children). Interview method was used to gather data for this qualitative research. 20 participants, who are parents of school-age children were chosen by convenience sampling. More importance was given to boys than girls in the earlier generation in terms of education, pampering, independence. Even now the difference exists, but witnessing a decreasing trend.

Index Terms: Gender, girl, boy, child, parenting

Introduction

Parental differential treatment occurs when parents treat their children differently. This can even lead to parental favouritism. Even if parents are not actually participating in parental differential treatment, if children perceive that it is occurring, they can still be negatively affected. Research has found that parental differential treatment can result in a lower self-esteem, more depressive symptoms, and more incidents of anxiety and aggression in the less favoured child. (Meunier 2012)

Parental differential treatment has short and lasting consequences for children's development (Buist, Dekovic, & Prinzie, 2013). Although parental differential treatment may denote parents favouring one sibling over another, in many instances differences in parenting may simply reflect parents meeting the varying developmental, emotional, and physical needs of their children (Kowal 1997).

When this differentiation happens on the basis of gender of the child, it is referred as gender differentiated parenting. Studies published in the 1970s and 1980s reported more autonomy-supportive strategies with boys than toward girls, but from 1990 onwards parents showed somewhat more autonomy-supportive strategies with girls than toward boys. In general, the differences between parenting of boys versus girls are minimal. (Endendijk 2016)

There is a shift in parenting style of fathers towards their children. Daughters experienced more positive parenting from both the parents as compared to sons. (Vyas 2016) Mothers showed authoritative behaviour towards sons. Fathers showed more permissiveness towards sons. (Yasmin 2018)

Boundaries or rules set for girls and boys are different. Girls can interpret parental boundaries as a form of attention and affection, while boys tend to interpret them as a form of restrictions, and for sure boundaries set for boys need to be given through explanations and discussion until they understand the meaning of the boundaries itself. (Hendriati Agustiani 2020) Parents' gender-role attitudes might play a role in the differential treatment of their sons and daughters. (Eagly 2000)

A study indicates that parents have differential expectations of sons and daughters as early as 24 hours after birth. In addition, girls and boys are viewed and treated differently by their parents, particularly their fathers. Boys are thought to be stronger and are treated more roughly and played with more actively than girls as early as birth. As children get older, girls are typically protected more (physically and emotionally) and allowed less autonomy than boys, and girls are not expected to achieve as much in the areas of mathematics and careers as are boys. (Katie Coleman)

Objective

This paper aims to examine the aspects of gender differentiated parenting among the present (parents of school-age children) and the previous generation (grandparents of school-age children).

Methodology

Interview method was used to gather data for this qualitative research. 20 participants (parents of school-age children) were chosen by convenience sampling. Open-ended questions were asked to the participants to understand their thoughts on gender differentiated parenting and their experience as a child and a parent.

Results and Discussion

- Boys were more pampered earlier. But some of the present-day parents are stricter with the boy child while taking a softer approach with the girl child.
- Girls are provided with more safety measures and restrictions than boys. It may be due to the prevalence of safety threats against girls in our society.
 - The gender-based differentiation is shown by relatives too.
 - Differences become more prominent after the girl child gets married.
 - Mother of girl child, who faced differential parenting as a child or faced suppression as a woman, because of her gender, becomes more thoughtful that the same should not happen to her child and ends up supporting the girl child more than the boy child.
 - Importance of academics and professional course choices differ based on gender.
 - Parents feel that more money is spent on education for a boy in contrary to the money invested on gold jewels and land for a girl.
 - The earlier generation held a very strong opinion that boys would be the saviour of the family in future. Girls are anyway to get married and move to a different family. But now there is more acceptance that wherever girls are, they have to be educated well. Education is seen as an asset to them which serves as a prerequisite for employment opportunities, enabling their independence.
- Boys are considered as the representative of the family. His career / professional success is considered mandatory. It is a matter of pride for the family and the parents strive to make it happen. Whereas the girl child's success is considered optional and most often happens with the individual efforts of the girl.

Conclusion

Gender differentiated parenting is not a bad practice. It allows the parent to cater to the specific needs and individual characteristics of the child. Though men and women are equal, we must admit the fact that they are different too. So are girls and boys. Hence a different approach to each child, when necessary, to ensure the child's wellness is justifiable. But the parent must also keep check that it is only gender differentiated parenting and not gender discriminated parenting.

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