

Predictors of Behavior Problems in Adolescents: A Path Model

Sasikala S. and Karunanidhi S.

University of Madras, Chennai

Just as health and illness in general, mental health is determined by multiple social, psychological, and biological factors. During adolescence, psychosocial issues could have different kinds of manifestations amongst which includes behavior problems. Therefore, it is essential to understand certain important determinants of behaviour problems among adolescents which helps to address these issues. In the present study, an attempt was made to identify the influence of parental expectations, unfulfillment of parental expectations, self-esteem, optimism, school environment and social support on behaviour problems among adolescents. Further, it also aimed to identify the direct and indirect effect of certain factors on behavior problems of adolescents. Correlation and Regression analysis were used to analyze the data. Self-esteem, optimism and peer acceptance emerged as protective factors and perception of unfulfillment of parental expectations, pressure to achieve and competition among pupil emerged as risk factors for behavior problems of adolescents. The direct and indirect effects of the psychosocial determinants of behaviour problems were also explored.

Keywords: Behaviour problems, Adolescents, Direct and indirect effects, Path model

Adolescence is a transitional period that requires special attention and protection. According to Erikson's (1950, 1968) theory, a unique development task awaits the individual at every developmental stage with a crisis that must be resolved. Successfully resolving the crisis may enhance the well-being of an individual. Healthy and positive path helps to achieve a positive identity, but when it is forced upon an adolescent by parents or less explored and if a positive future path is not defined, then identity confusion reigns (Erikson, 1968). This leads to withdrawal, isolation from peers and family, or they immerse themselves in the world of peers and lose their identity in the crowd (Santrock, 2007).

Many studies in India have proven that there is more number of psychosocial problems during adolescence. A six-year longitudinal study has found that among 186 children who scored below the cut-off for psychiatric disorders, 20 children developed a psychiatric disorder indicating a high rate of incidence (Malhotra, Kohli, Kapoor, & Pradhan, 2009). Dhoundiyal and Venkatesh (2009) reported conduct problems as the primary problem among the children followed by problems in peer relations, prosocial behaviour

and emotional symptoms. Anees, Najam, Zulfia and Ali (2006) reported a prevalence of problem behavior as 25.2% in 14-15 years age group and 10.3% in the 10-13 years age group. Srinath et al. (2005) found 12.5% of the prevalence rate of psychiatric disorders in 4-16-year-old children.

Chen and Simons-Morton (2009) identified psychosocial and family factors as vulnerable precursors to the co-occurrence of conduct problems and depressive symptomology. Gaylord-Harden (2008) reported that positive parenting was related to higher achievement and lower behaviour problems. Parental goals and aspirations are best described as internal representations of desired states or outcomes that parents hold for their children. The common thread that runs through the parents and their wards is the agonizing anxiety in fulfilling parental aspirations. Many parents believe that transmitting a sense of high expectations to their offspring is one of the ways of helping them to build confidence, self-esteem, and personal standards of merit and value. To strive for academic excellence is perceived as a moral obligation and children become stressed when they haven't met the demands and expectations of their parents (Xing, Huang, Huang, Sanchez,