Parenting Styles, Value Conflict and Aggression

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Conflict, a state of disharmony between incompatible ideas or interests influences human behaviour and social interactions. Various situations stimulate mutually exclusive impulses, desires, ideas or tendencies. Internal peace and harmony are thus affected by conflicts. Conscious mental efforts and evaluation of various possibilities help the individual to decide between incompatible ideas and values. Such decision making and processing of information is an important feature of cognitive development. Individuals continue to face varied conflicts in different contexts. This exposure brings about certain response patterns in the individual, in accordance with context and content of the issues as well as personality of the individuals. With maturity and experience, decision making abilities and reflective thinking are enhanced. Insight of the conceptual framework of conflict is required to understand human behaviour in conflicting situations. Myers (1993) defines conflict as a perceived incompatibility of actions and goals that prevents, obstructs, interferes or in some way makes another activity less effective. Davidson & Neale (1998) describe conflict as a state of being torn between competing forces.

Out of a wide variety of conflicts in the social situations, intrapersonal conflict is the one that goes within the individual. Studying the value conflicts and the correlates would help to understand some of the complexities of human behaviour. Much of the intrapersonal conflict is attributed to the value conflicts. “Values are beliefs and attitudes about the way things should be. We carry with us values that influence our thoughts, feelings and actions” (Santrock, 2007). Specific choices or actions are rooted in values what individuals consider beneficial to their well being (Harre & Lamb, 1983). Boulding (1977) asserts

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Violence and Conflict Resolution

that a great deal of human accomplishment comes from the productive and cumulative behaviour of non-conflict. Bharadwaj (2001) says that whenever two or more incompatible goals, motives, activities or impulses are active at the same time in relation to desirable or pro-social aspects of the well-being of the humanity, they can be said to be the value conflicts.

Values develop early in life and thus conflicts related with values are deep rooted. Value conflicts are attributed to various socializing practices and significant individuals in one’s environment. Bretherton (1985) believes that family as a unit of social organisation serves as an effective agent of socialization where parent-child relationship happens to be a central factor in children’s social development. Perceived parenting models/styles are of immense relevance in this context. Parental expectations give way to value assumptions. Several reports indicate that perceived parental expectations and attitudes correlate more with adolescent behaviour and attitudes than the stated parental expectations (Acock & Bengston, 1980; Jaccard, Dittus & Gordon, 1998; Sieving, McNeely & Blum, 2000; Smith, 1982).

Various dimensions of parenting may be associated with conflicts on different values. The kind of inner experiences a child has through interactions with parents contributes to the development of schemas and self-schemas. Cognitive behavioural perspective highlights the impact these experiences have on the individual’s cognitions and developing schemas. Bandura (1977) explains that social cognitive theory posits that the environment and social situation provide cues about acceptable types of behaviour. Baranowski, Perry & Parcel (1997) reveal that from personal and behavioural interactions with the environment, individuals assume a mental representation of the environment, whether real or imagined, that may affect their behaviour. Schema is an organized representation of prior knowledge about a concept or about some stimulus that helps guide our processing of current information (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Our schemas act as our guides. Choice of appropriate behaviour in particular situations and our decisions are directed by our schemas. These act as our frames of references. These schemas develop on the basis of many assumptions imbibed in our early experience in the socio-cultural environment.

Influence of parenting is one of the most important medium for cultivating various assumptions regarding what is good and what is bad? What should be sought and what should be avoided? Interactions with parents and other vicarious learning sources might reinforce some value assumptions, leading to gradual assimilation of these values. Inconsistencies in parental expectations might not furnish clearer frames of references or schemas and thus such unclear value assumptions will form and lead to value conflicts i.e., approach avoidance conflicts or dilemmas in different contexts. Cognitive processes involved in moral reasoning invoke evaluation of one’s behaviour in relation with others and
Parenting Styles, Value Conflict and Aggression

environment. So the subjective reasoning affects the decisions and choices. Piaget (1965) believes that moral thinking shifts through successive stages from blind acceptance of roles and authority (moral realism) to an understanding of others and needs (moral relativism). Mature adults get to have better insight due to enrichment by experience, evaluation and reevaluation of their values and thus they develop strong convictions. Comparatively, in younger individuals that stage of evaluation in reference to actual experience is yet to come. Kohlberg (1969) believes that moral development coincides with cognitive development. As individuals develop higher levels of cognitive ability, they replace conventional social rules, which have been learnt from parents and other interactions in the environment with their own constructed principles of justice.

So the value conflicts would play a role in the everyday behavioural interactions of the youth e.g., aggressive tendencies, frustrations, anxiety may be aroused. Intrapersonal value conflicts form the core of the personality conflicts and thus such conflicts can affect the dispositions of developing youth. Smetana (1988) reveals that in multifaceted situations, youth may often find themselves faced with conflicts which oppose moral considerations (Is it right or wrong? Will this hurt another person?) against conventional (What have others done in this situation?) or personal (It’s only going to affect me).

Value conflicts may lead to aggressive tendencies and culminate in interpersonal conflicts. Aggression, a forceful behaviour, attitude or action can be expressed verbally, physically or even through covert hostility. Dollard et al. (1939) are of the view that “occurrence of aggressive behaviours always presupposes the existence of frustration” and that the “existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression”. Lorenz (1966) defines aggression as the fighting instinct in beast and man which is directed against members of the same species. Aggressive behaviour can be stimulated internally as well as externally. Out of varied significant internal factors, value conflict can be one of the factors triggering aggressive behaviour. Fontaine et al. (2002) found significant relations between response decision processes as well as response selection and externalizing behaviour in grade 9, 10 and 11 students.

Since aggression in youth in present times is a disturbing trend, it becomes an imperative to study different possible correlates of aggression. Parental interactions seem to be one of the contributory factors of value conflict. Value conflict further could be the underlying factor that triggers aggressive tendencies. In view of these observations, the present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

Objectives

1. To explore the relationship between perceived parenting and value conflicts.
2. To investigate the relationship between value conflicts and aggression.

Hypotheses
1. It is expected that inadequate parenting would be positively correlated with value conflicts.
2. It is also expected that value conflicts would be positively correlated with aggression.

METHOD

Sample
Sample consisted of 50 boys and 50 girls, randomly selected from Chandigarh. Subjects were between the age group of 18-21 years.

Tools
The following tools were used to collect the required data:
1. Parenting Scale (Bharadwaj, Sharma & Garg, 1998) - This scale has 40 items related to eight different modes of parenting. Subjects’ responses are observed for their perceptions of the parenting styles being used by their parents. The scoring of this scale is based on five point Likert Scale. The eight parenting models included in the scale are – i) Rejection vs. Acceptance, ii) Carelessness vs. Protection, iii) Neglect vs. Indulgence, iv) Utopian Expectations vs. Realism, v) Lenient Standards vs. Moralism, vi) Freedom vs. Discipline, vii) Faulty Role Expectations vs. Realistic Role Expectations, viii) Marital Conflict vs. Marital Adjustment.
2. Value Conflict Scale (Bharadwaj, 2001) - The scale has 24 items to measure value conflicts related to six dichotomous modes of value probabilities of everyday life. The six dimensions of the conflict used in this scale are - A) Evasion vs. Fortitude, B) Dependence vs. Self – Reliance, C) Selfishness vs. Probity, D) Hate vs. Love, E) Fear vs. Assertion, F) Pragmatism vs. Idealism. The scoring of value - conflict scale is based on the line of Likert five point scale.
3. Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992) - This questionnaire has total 29 items which consists of four factors, Physical Aggression(PA), Verbal Aggression(VA), Anger(A) and Hostility(H). The total score for Aggression is the sum of the factor scores. Scoring is based on five point Likert Scale.

Procedure
Two groups of 50 boys and 50 girls were administered value conflict scale, perceived parenting scale and aggression questionnaire. Scoring was done as
per norms. For the statistical interpretation, the data was subjected to the correlational analysis. Since the data of the two variables value conflict and parenting was not continuous i.e., dichotomized, tetrachoric correlation was used to find the relationship between them. The data of the aggression scores is in continuity, whereas value conflict data is nominal, hence point biserial correlation was used for the study of these two variables.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

From results (Table I & II), it is evident that there are mixed results. Tetrachoric correlation coefficients between different value conflicts and different dimensions of parenting have been shown in Table I for boys and in Table II for girls. Point biserial correlations coefficient between value conflict and aggression have been tabulated in Table III. The results have been discussed with regard to parenting styles and value conflicts, and value conflicts and aggression separately.

**I. Value Conflict and Parenting**

Quite a few positive correlations between inadequate parenting and value conflicts have been observed though, for both boys (Table I) and girls (Table II). Among the six types of value conflicts and eight types of parenting models, the significant correlations of each conflict with different model of parenting for boys and girls are as follows:

**A. Evasion vs Fortitude**

The conflict regarding tendency of avoidance versus boldly facing the situation has been observed to be significantly positively correlated with perceived parenting style of carelessness in both boys and girls, and with rejection and utopian expectations in girls. These results match the expectations. Children subjugated to rejection and carelessness will not have enough confidence and any guidelines to adhere to while making decisions. A study by Bharadwaj (1996) supports these results. It was found that parental acceptance is positively associated with cognitive competence, self-concept and achievement of both boys and girls.

Utopian expectations that do not match the capabilities of a child also may be linked to this particular conflict between facing the situation or avoiding it, because of lack of a realistic frame of reference. Negative correlations have emerged on this conflict with lenient standards of perceived parenting for boys and girls. It seems that more lenient standards or lenient restrictions on deviation from ethical and moral behaviour, lesser are the conflict on evasion vs. fortitude. When parents are too lenient on ethical and moral behaviour, children do not have to act on any particular expectations, so their choices are not hard for them. Value conflicts originate in social practices and parent child interaction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting Models</th>
<th>Rejection vs. Acceptance</th>
<th>Carelessness vs. Protection</th>
<th>Neglect vs. Indulgence</th>
<th>Utopian Expectations vs. Realism</th>
<th>Lenient Standards vs. Moralism</th>
<th>Freedom vs. Discipline</th>
<th>Faulty Role Expectations vs. Realistic Role Expectations</th>
<th>Marital Conflict vs. Marital Adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evasion vs. Fortitude</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>-.29*</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependence vs. Self Reliance</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.32*</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.85**</td>
<td>-.25</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selfishness vs. Probity</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>-.25</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate vs. Love</td>
<td>.33*</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>-.84**</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear vs. Assertion</td>
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<td>.35*</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.35*</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pragmatism vs. Idealism</td>
<td>-.31*</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td>-.27*</td>
<td>-.30*</td>
<td>.31*</td>
<td>-.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05 level
** p < .01 level
### TABLE II
Correlations ($r_t$) between Parenting Models and Value Conflicts (Girls)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting Models</th>
<th>Value Conflicts</th>
<th>Rejection vs. Acceptance</th>
<th>Carelessness vs. Protection</th>
<th>Neglect vs. Indulgence</th>
<th>Utopian Expectations vs. Realism</th>
<th>Lenient Standards vs. Moralism</th>
<th>Freedom vs. Discipline</th>
<th>Faulty Role Expectations vs. Realistic Role Expectations</th>
<th>Marital Conflict vs. Marital Adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evasion vs. Fortitude</td>
<td>.77**</td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.87**</td>
<td>-.30*</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>-.25</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence vs. Self Reliance</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.46*</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.75**</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.33*</td>
<td>-.25</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfishness vs. Probity</td>
<td>.86**</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.80**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate vs. Love</td>
<td>-.28*</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.87**</td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear vs. Assertion</td>
<td>-.33*</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.32*</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatism vs. Idealism</td>
<td>-.84**</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
B. Dependence vs Self Reliance

Significant positive correlations have been observed with utopian expectations by parents for girls, but negative for boys. It seems that utopian expectations of parents affect girls’ decisive ability on dependence vs. self-reliance, and not that of the boys. A probable reason is that girls are more affected by parental expectations and want to live up to those, however lofty and mismatching they may be. They would find it difficult to decide between dependence and self-reliance according to the situation. Prasar (2000) found that adequate parenting emerged on a high need either for the inculcation of self-reliance or de-escalation of the existing conflict associated with it. This study supports the results in case of girls in the present study.

Significant negative correlations have emerged with parenting model of carelessness (boys and girls) and with freedom (girls). The probable explanation is that protective parenting may be associated with higher conflicts in children regarding dependence vs. self-reliance. When protection becomes overprotection, children become too safety conscious and inhibited as regarding taking independent plunge or not in different situations, leading to a conflict on dependence vs. self-reliance.

C. Selfishness Vs. Probity

The conflict regarding gaining by either moral or immoral means is positively related with parenting styles of utopian expectations (boys and girls), and with rejection, freedom, faulty role expectations and marital conflict (girls). Clearer frames of reference and clarity in schemas, value assumptions learnt from parents can be associated with lesser value conflicts on selfishness vs. probity.

The hypothesis stands proved that inadequate parenting is positively correlated with value conflicts. The results are consistent with Prasar’s (2000) study that revealed that role of fathering was more conducive for the inculcation of probity value assumptions. Turner & Barrett (1998) also found that severity of interparental conflict predicted adolescents’ internalized and externalized adjustment problems.

D. Hate Vs. Love

The conflict regarding emotional extremes in relationships is positively correlated with rejection, neglect, freedom (boys), marital conflict (girls) and lenient standards of perceived parenting (boys and girls).

For stability and clarity regarding emotional development in children, adequate parenting provides good role models for children. There is a significant role of parents in the development of schemas and self-schemas that assist the individual for the interpretations of the stimuli and individuals in the socio-cultural environment. Garg (1996) reported that parental acceptance was positively associated with emotional competencies like adequate expression and control of
emotions, ability to function with problem emotions and encouragement of positive emotions. Prasar’s (2000) study revealed that adequate mothering and fathering emerged as important correlates of hate vs. love conflict. Mithas (1997) found that emotional competence was found to be greater in those adolescents whose perceived mothering was associated with acceptance than that of rejection.

E. Fear Vs. Assertion

The conflict between trying to deny fears or learning to function inspite of fear has been found to be positively correlated with perceived parenting styles of carelessness, neglect, faulty role expectations (boys), and with lenient standards and freedom (girls). The hypothesis stands proved. Mithas (1997) found emotional competence to be greater in those adolescents whose perceived parenting was associated with moralism as against lenient standards. Probable explanation is that inadequate parenting does not instill a stable sense of security in the child. Insecurity breeds further conflict of fear vs. assertion.

Significant negative correlations have occurred with the perceived parenting of neglect and rejection in girls, and lenient standards in boys. Reasons for negative correlations with neglect and rejection in girls could be that there are different role expectations from boys and girls. In male dominated societies, rejection and neglect by parents towards girls is more or less accepted with a pinch of salt, and does not lead to any major conflict in girls. Lenient standards provide more opportunities for exposure to the boys, so they gain more confidence in trying out new things and thus, there is lesser conflict on fear vs. assertion.

F. Pragmatism Vs. Idealism

Significant positive correlations have been observed with parenting styles of carelessness, utopian expectations (boys) and faulty role expectations (boys and girls) with regard to the conflict between pragmatism and idealism. It could be due to the reason that clearer value assumptions and good role modeling by parents would be associated with better decision making in pragmatism vs. idealism situation. Whatever approach and consistency worked well for parents also provides a tested and tried frame of reference for children to follow.

Significant negative correlations have been observed with rejection (boys and girls) and lenient standards and freedom (boys). Rejected children will not really have much expectation from parents and thus no pressure to perform in a set way. May be such choice making does not bother these youngsters for deciding in any direction. Regarding lenient standards and freedom to boys, since boys are not questioned as much as girls on various issues to be practical or idealistic, it will not be a much of a conflict for them. They are not as much accountable to adults unless of course they have set certain standards for
themselves to follow. As by the time cognitive evaluative process develops fully, such conflicts will gradually wean away and individual’s convictions will grow stronger.

II. Value Conflict and Aggression

Overall low positive correlations have been observed between value conflict and aggression scores for boys and girls. Significant positive correlations have been observed between aggression scores and selfishness vs. probity for both girls and boys i.e., higher value conflict on selfishness vs. probity is seen associated with higher aggressive tendencies (Table III). The hypothesis of the present study stands proved in case of this particular value conflict. Selfishness vs. probity conflict is a state of indecision leading to inclination to gain by either immoral or moral means. This kind of conflict between ‘gratification at any cost and gratification only if due and correct’ can be quite complex. Young individuals can be caught in the ‘to be or not to be’ situation. Inner conflicts can lead to agitation and aggressive dispositions against the world at large or in a particular social context. Fontaine’s (2006) observations lend support to this finding. It was reported that considerable scientific and intervention attention has been paid to judgement and decision making systems associated with aggressive behaviour in youth. A model of real-time decision making must incorporate both impulsive actions and rational thought. The model posits that Response Evaluation and Decision (RED) processes can be circumvented through impulsive responding in aggressive behavioural interactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Conflict</th>
<th>Aggression</th>
<th>Coefficient of Correlation ($r_{pbis}$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selfishness vs.</td>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>.30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probity</td>
<td>Scores</td>
<td>.28*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The more conflicting values which involve difficult decision making may be expressed through aggression i.e., the individual will respond aggressively in interactions. In the present study, only one value conflict i.e., selfishness vs. probity has shown significant positive correlation with aggression in both boys and girls. The value conflict regarding gaining by immoral or moral means can be traced back into the early socialization norms, most important parenting. Morally gained acquisitions and immorally acquired assets or choices are differentiated and their relative significance is highlighted. Thus the conflict between selfish interests at the cost of some morally denounced values or being satisfied only in what one gets following righteousness, is the one that is significantly related to aggression. Fontaine et al. (2002) found significant relations between response decision processes as well as response selection and
externalizing behaviour.

Correlations of aggression with other value conflicts have come out positive but they are not significant. So according to the results not all value conflicts have correlated significantly with aggression. There have to be other ways of expression or other behavioural patterns related to value conflicts e.g., depression, anxiety, depending on the personality of the individual. Another probability is that may be there is more acceptance of the conflicting situations in youth and they are not really pressurized to show any frustration or anger and they do not let the indecision weigh on their minds much.

Also that may be the youth of today face some different kind of moral dilemmas more than the one they were tested upon. Many psychologists have felt the need to study the content of actual moral dilemmas of children and youth. Nucci & Lee (1993) reveal that one of the challenges adolescents face is the coordination of personal issues with those of social and moral issues.

Interpretations of social situations which relate to some value conflict may be different. Content and context keep changing in the socio-cultural environment. The context in each of the dilemmas or the value conflicts is very important. The context or the situation is the decisive factor regarding the emergence of the conflict in the individual. Turiel et al. (1991) found that youth are influenced by the context and by those with whom they are interacting. Breen & Crosbie-Burnett (1993) found in a study that when asked to describe the moral dilemmas they face, students have mentioned issues involving peers and family, conflicts regarding honesty, cheating, stealing and lying, problems like alcohol, tobacco, decisions to intervene or report issues of civil rights, duty to country, career choices and financial decisions. Nucci & Neale (1993) believe that adolescents’ decisions about behaviour appear to be influenced by the context and the content of the situation.

CONCLUSION

Value conflicts lie at the very root of one’s identity. They are difficult to resolve. Internal discomfort and agitation is bound to reflect in one’s overt actions and interactions with others. Thus value conflict is one of the risk factors for aggression. Through parenting and other important parameters like education, it is important that clearer value assumptions as far as possible are developed in children, and also of course the values that aim at betterment of the individual and society. For this purpose, clear instructions and consistency in discipline are required. Inquisitiveness has to be encouraged and queries have to be satisfied. Love, acceptance and realistic expectations by the parents would have a positive impact on the moral and cognitive development of children. With clearer value assumptions, decision making becomes less difficult and more specific. An individual can have stronger convictions in due course. Of course, the final effectiveness and wholesomeness of individual’s interactions
Violence and Conflict Resolution

in different contexts would depend on the kind of values one holds. The higher and ultimate aim and aspiration for evolved human beings shall always be productivity, happiness and peace.

REFERENCES


