

# BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS AND ADJUSTMENTS AMONG ADOLESCENTS

**Dr. Kumari Sangita**

M.A., Ph.D. (Psychology)

B.R.A.Bihar University, Muzaffarpur

**Abstract :** Adolescents today face numerous problems and get into troubles. They deal with friends and families who are under great pressure of neglect, poverty, parental separation or peer group pressure, and are also disturbed on issues such as religion, societal norms or values. The adolescents are confused as they go through some of the dreadful experiences. One of the most prominent struggles of the adolescents is to get independence from their parents while indeed they need parental guidance. All these can lead to behavioural problems. Life for many adolescents is a painful tug of war filled with advices and conflicting demands from parents, teachers, friends and family. Why all these problems ?

**Keywords :** Adolescents, Behaviour, Adjustment, Life, Parental guideline.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence, the Biosocial Transition, is a period of rapid growth and maturation. The period of adolescence is filled with intellectual and emotional changes, in addition to other major biological and physical changes. According to Stanley Hall, 'It is a period of Stress and Strain, Storm and Strife' (Dandapani, 2007). The physical changes disturb the tranquility of the adolescents and create emotional imbalance. They tend to withdraw from social contacts, retreat from the world of reality and spend time in day-dreaming and fantasy, releasing pent-up emotions. However, excessive indulgence in fantasies incapacitates them to overcome the real life problems. According to Piaget (Mangal2006), it is the 'Formal Operation Stage'; individuals are able to think abstractly, test hypotheses and deal with problems that are not physically present in their environment. It reflects the most advanced period in the functioning of the cognitive system. Thus, it is a period of expansion of one's mental capacities and become increasingly flexible and abstracts with problem solving mechanisms.

Freedom is yet another need of the adolescents. Although relations with parents are good, there are still periods of conflicts; the adolescents want to be independent of their parents (Gouws & Kruger 1994; Rice 1995). Adolescents feel that their parents are out of mode and want to conform to their peer group. They begin to question the parent's values, attitudes and interests as they begin to form their own opinion about things and cause behavioural problems. In order to keep group membership, they refuse adult's norms with regard to customs, style of clothing, colour or length of hair or even taste of music but it is not so to go against group pressures. Some parents find it difficult to agree with this drive for independence, as too early separation or emotional independence from the family can cause alienation, susceptibility to negative peer influence, and physically and socially unhealthy behaviours (Papalia & Olds, 1990). The peer group takes the place of the family in providing status acceptance, a sense of belonging, security and all that the family provides. During this unstable period the peer group acts as the stabilizer and contributes to their self-esteem, protects and provides space for the uncertain adolescent (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1993; Barber 1994).

The famous psychoanalysts, Alfred Alder (Dandapani, 2007), says that parents can spoil a child either by granting unlimited freedom or by allowing very limit of it. In the former case, they learn to behave as they like at home and outside. When things go against their will they become rebellious and aggressive. They lack self-restraint and oppose others and even become alienated. The adult's inconsistent demands creates a dilemma, not knowing how to react to the various situations in life. They suffer from abrupt mood swings and emotional instability. They even resort to Truancy in resentment towards parents or teachers and

long to be free from family bonds and rigid school schedules. They surely need guidance and help to resolve their emotional conflicts.

The adolescents need to feel that their teachers accepts them socially, if not, they create behavioural problems in the class. Eric Erickson (Mangal, 2006), the famous psychoanalyst, postulated that the development of an individual is the result of his interaction with his social environment and is under constant pressure from the society. With the sudden changes in their bodies and mental functioning and the altered demands of society compels them to begin to search for their own personal identity and new roles. Failure of which will result in confusion and impulsive behaviours. His vocational interest increases and decides his career. To conform or not conform to peer group expectations and pressure is the most disturbing problem faced by adolescents. They also have the tendency of hero worshipping and adopt their styles and mannerism to enhance their social image. The adolescents crave for recognition and strive to build up a self-image and status in the society. When adolescents are ignored or compared with smart ones a 'negative self-image' develop in them which make them feel worthless and succumb to notorious, socially disapproved means. They indulge in acts of violence and excitement to get the attention of others in a socially undesirable manner. Psychosocially, adolescents persist to deal with the enduring issues of success and competence, while identity, autonomy, intimacy, sexuality and social status appear as other leading concerns (Steinberg,1990,1993). Adolescent problem behaviours can be seen in part as the failure of schools to capture students' sense of social affiliation and provide educational experiences and a social context within which adolescents can develop social competence (Harter,1982) and experience success (Bandura, 1986).

Adolescents have the inclination to show delinquency, an expression of aggression in socially non-acceptable ways. One of the basic psychological needs that contributes to the well being of an individual is security, fostered by parents in the home by the right kind of upbringing. Not only the deprivation of love and affection at home due to parental separation, divorce or remarriage but also conditions of neglect, poverty and the tension following it, lead to an unsecured feeling and is likely to carry it over to the outside world. Thus, they do not have a sense of belonging and feel alienated from home and society. Generation gap, teen-age culture or youth clubs stand for the new subculture of adolescent alienation. Increasing urbanisation, insufficient facilities, unhealthy movies and journals, unprincipled political setup, broken families, over protection and restriction, poverty, dictatorial teachers, poor curriculum, less co-curricular activities and amenities or poor teaching methodologies lead to unsound behaviour among the adolescents.

According to Robert Havighurst of the University of Chicago, in every culture it is possible to master certain skills and learn certain behaviour patterns, the developmental tasks, as it is essential to acquire them for personal and social adjustment. As defined by Havighurst (Dandapani, 2007), 'Developmental task is one which arises at a certain period in the life of the individual, successful accomplishment of which leads to his happiness and success with later tasks while failure leads to unhappiness and difficulty with later tasks'. However, as societal values change some of the old tasks get eliminated or replaced with new ones. During the period of adolescence, the individual achieves emotional independence from parents, gain economic independence, vocational awareness and civic sense. Several agencies like home, school or community aid in the growth process and social adjustment of the adolescents.

## II. ADJUSTMENT OF ADOLESCENCE

Good (1959) states that adjustment is the process of finding and adopting modes of behaviour suitable to the environment or the changes in the environment. Kulshrestha (1979) explained that the adjustment process is a way in which the individual attempts to deal with stress, tensions or conflicts, and meet his or her needs. In this process, the individual also makes efforts to maintain harmonious relationships with the environment. Every individual from the time he or she steps out of the family and goes to school, makes to a long series of adjustments between the whole unique personality and the environment.

Adjustment refers to the behavioural process by which humans and other animals maintain equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the obstacles of their environments. A series of adjustment begins when a need is felt and ends when it is contented.. Social and cultural adjustments are similar to physiological adjustments, for example, when hungry they seek food and the need is met. Individuals struggle to be comfortable and meet their psychological needs such as love through the social networks they inhabit. When needs occur, especially in new or changed environment, they throw interpersonal activity to satisfy their needs. In this way, people increase their awareness and comfort with their environments, and believe that their needs will be accomplished in the future through their social networks. The continuing problems in social and cultural adjustment are too much to cope and are followed by anxiety or depression. Adjustment plays a crucial role in the development of an individual and it is responsible for the organization of behaviour to life circumstances.

Adjustment is indeed the harmonious relationship between an individual and his environment and refers to a continuous process by which he changes his own behaviour or tries to change the environment or brings change in both to produce appropriate relationship with his environment. It also show the efficiency of an individual in performing his duties under different situations and to cope successfully with his environment. Adjustment also influences the academic achievement of adolescents. By establishing good relationship between the situations in the curriculum with that of the environment (Erica, 1996) the craving to feel accepted and to fit into the peer group is one of the strongest forces in adolescents; this leads teens to do things that they know are wrong, dangerous, or risky. On the positive side, the pressure to keep up with the peer group can also motivate adolescents to attain goals that they might never aim for on their own.

Adolescents who maintain a positive association or social bond with their school are more prone to participate in a variety of pro-social behaviours and perform to their potential academically, and are less likely to get involved in problem behaviours such as lying, theft, fighting, bullying, truancy, vandalism and substance use. Bonding to the school ( Hawkins and Weis, 1985), includes attachment to pro-social peers, commitment to conventional academic and social activities at school, and belief in the established norms for school behaviour. The common adjustment problems of adolescents are lack of interest in school work, lack of proper study schedule, vocational adjustment, adjustment with the school discipline and adjustment with emotional disturbance (Maria, 2008).

Social adjustment is the psychological process through which individuals cope with the challenges that adolescents face daily (Sarka, 1989). Adolescents spend plenty of time daily in the company of peers. Social adjustment “reflects the degree to which students have integrated themselves into the social structures and among other kinds of social integration (Crede & Niehorster, 2012). Various research studies on Social Adjustment of adolescents show that acquisition of skills, good peer groups and harmonious home and school environment has a positive impact on adolescents' behaviour. The Co Relational Study on Social Adjustment and Life Skills in Iranian High School(Ahmad, Mariam, Soodani, 2013)showed significant positive correlation between life skills and social adjustments. Study on Adjustment Problems among School Students (Raju & Khaja, 2007) showed that adjustment of school children is primarily dependent on school variables such as class in which they are studying, the medium of instruction and the type of management. The study on Social Adjustment and Life Skills in Students of Zahedan University (Gharibi & Sanagouymoharer, 2011) showed significant positive correlation among life skills and social adjustments, with social adjustment scores slightly high among females. In the study on Peer Group Pressure as a Determinant of Adolescent Social Adjustment in Nigerian Schools (Adesoji, 2010) showed that peer group pressure among adolescents is related to their social adjustment and that the gender of the adolescents affects their social adjustment as well.



**III. PARENTS' AND TEACHERS' ROLE**

Parents and teachers should realize the process of development of the adolescents and the cause of their behavioural problems, in order to assist them to lead a harmonious life. They can play a very constructive part in guiding the adolescents during this identity versus confusion crisis. The adolescents longing for individuality must be fully accepted and it should be undoubtedly understood that adolescents crave to be identified as adults and must, therefore, be treated as such and not as children as many parents and teachers do. They should never be belittled or humiliated in front of their peers or anyone else. They must be assigned responsibilities independently or collectively and be trusted for their promises and conduct. Teachers and parents should develop a good friendly relationship with the adolescents and should maintain their emotional balance, and also help the adolescents to control their emotions. Avoidance of anger, harsh punishment and being extremely strict can prevent maladjustment in the adolescents. Giving them opportunities to exhibit their talents and ideas through activities, both at home and school, can boost their confidence. Freedom should be given to them in selecting their courses, games, hobbies or even household activities, and also in planning and executing them. Foster in them essential ideals like Patriotism, Nationalism, Citizenship and Self-sacrifices through club activities, social services, moral and life skills teaching. Appreciation and applaud in their participation and success can motivate them, and eventually develop positive attitudes. Socialisation is a crucial task during the adolescence as it aids in learning important skills, developing tolerance of different people and cultures and also gaining self-confidence. With promising home and school atmosphere, encouraging parenting and teaching practices and good rapport between parents, teachers and the adolescents will surely help them overcome all the difficulties of the adolescence period and lead a successful life.

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