

Parental Expectations and Their Role in Adolescent Mental Health: A Study in Anjar Taluka Gujarat

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage often marked by mental health challenges, with parental expectations being a significant factor influencing psychological well-being. This study investigates the impact of parental expectations on adolescent mental health in Anjar Taluka, Kachchh district, Gujarat, focusing on the relationship between these expectations and levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Using a sociological lens, the research examines how academic and career-related pressures from parents affect adolescents' mental health outcomes, with particular attention to the role of socio-economic and gender factors.

The study is based on a sample of 150 adolescent respondents aged 12-18 years, employing a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were collected through the UCLA Loneliness Scale to measure loneliness, anxiety and depression. Additionally, in-depth interviews with adolescents and their parents provided qualitative insights into the influence of parental expectations.

The findings reveal a strong correlation between high parental expectations, particularly regarding academic performance and career success, and elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Adolescents reporting higher parental pressure exhibited increased feelings of isolation and inadequacy. Gender differences were notable, with female adolescents experiencing additional stress due to the intersection of academic expectations and traditional gender roles.

This study highlights the need for parental education on the psychological impact of unrealistic expectations and suggests mental health interventions tailored to adolescents in rural and semi-urban areas like Anjar Taluka. Addressing parental expectations could significantly improve adolescent mental health outcomes.

Keywords: adolescent, mental health, loneliness, anxiety, depression

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence, the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, is a crucial developmental period characterized by significant physical, emotional, and social changes. It is often a time marked by both newfound independence and intensified vulnerability, particularly concerning mental health. Adolescents face numerous challenges as they navigate identity formation, social relationships, and aspirations for their future. Among the various influences shaping adolescent development, parental expectations play a critical role, impacting not only educational and career ambitions but also psychological well-being. The balance between supporting adolescents' aspirations and imposing undue expectations can significantly influence their mental health. Parental expectations, when perceived as high or unattainable, can become a source of stress, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy for adolescents, often leading to adverse mental health outcomes. This study investigates how parental expectations affect adolescent mental health, specifically focusing on the impact of such expectations on anxiety, depression, and loneliness among adolescents in Anjar Taluka, Kachchh district, Gujarat.

In the context of modern Indian society, the pressures associated with academic performance and career success are amplified by a competitive environment, especially for adolescents. Many parents view academic achievements and specific career paths as essential indicators of success, often placing these expectations on their children. These expectations can range from excelling in exams and securing admission to prestigious educational institutions to pursuing careers perceived as secure and lucrative. However, for adolescents, these expectations can be both motivating and burdensome, particularly when aligned with intense parental hopes that might not align with their interests or capabilities. The resultant tension can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal, impacting adolescents' overall mental health. Studies have shown that high parental expectations, coupled with low adolescent autonomy, often result in strained family relationships and heightened psychological

distress among adolescents. This research aims to understand how academic and career-related expectations from parents influence mental health outcomes in adolescents, with a sociological focus on the role of socio-economic status and gender in shaping these dynamics.

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of parental expectations on adolescent mental health. A sample of 150 adolescents, aged 12-18, was selected from various socio-economic backgrounds in Anjar Taluka. Quantitative data were collected using the UCLA Loneliness Scale, along with validated tools to measure anxiety and depression levels, to gauge the mental health status of the respondents. These measures provide a statistical basis for assessing the prevalence and intensity of loneliness, anxiety, and depression in relation to perceived parental expectations. Additionally, in-depth interviews with both adolescents and their parents were conducted, allowing for qualitative insights into the nature of parental expectations and their perceived impact. These interviews provide a platform for adolescents to voice their personal experiences, while also capturing the perspectives of parents regarding their aspirations and the reasons behind their expectations.

A unique aspect of this study is its attention to socio-economic and gender factors as they relate to parental expectations. Adolescents from different socio-economic backgrounds often experience varying levels of pressure, depending on family resources, cultural values, and career opportunities perceived to be accessible to them. Similarly, gender plays a significant role in shaping parental expectations, with distinct expectations often placed on boys and girls regarding educational attainment and career choices. By exploring these factors, the study seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of how parental expectations influence adolescent mental health, and how these influences are shaped by broader social and cultural contexts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The link between parental expectations and adolescent mental health has been explored in various studies, often showing a significant association between high parental expectations and increased levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness among adolescents. Research underscores that **academic pressure** originating from parental expectations is a significant contributor to mental health challenges, especially when expectations exceed adolescents' coping abilities (Tang et al., 2023)

In studies focused on Asian and Western contexts, it has been shown that adolescents facing high academic and career expectations from parents often experience elevated stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. In many cases, the intense focus on academic success contributes to a performance-driven mindset that impacts adolescents' self-worth and social relationships (Quach et al., 2023). Such pressures can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including insomnia, decreased life satisfaction, and social withdrawal.

Further research reveals that the mismatch between adolescents' actual achievements and the idealized goals set by their parents contributes to psychological distress. According to **self-discrepancy theory**, when adolescents feel that they cannot meet parental expectations, they may experience heightened emotional difficulties and reduced self-esteem (Higgins, 1987). Studies have shown that adolescents who perceive their parents' expectations as unreasonably high are more likely to report symptoms of loneliness and social isolation, which are known to correlate with depression and anxiety.

Socio-economic factors also shape how parental expectations affect adolescent mental health. Families with limited resources may have fewer educational and career opportunities available to their children, yet they may impose high expectations as a means of social mobility. This dynamic can intensify stress in adolescents from low-income families, as they struggle with fewer resources to meet family aspirations (Subramani, 2023).

Additionally, research by Jayanthi (2021) indicates that boys and girls experience parental pressures differently, with gender-specific expectations often leading to distinct mental health outcomes.

Some studies also highlight that not all parental expectations are harmful. When expectations are realistic and balanced, they can positively motivate adolescents and foster resilience, enhancing mental well-being. However, excessive expectations that ignore individual capabilities and interests tend to worsen adolescents' mental health, amplifying feelings of inadequacy and frustration (Zhu, 2022). This nuanced view suggests that parental expectations influence adolescent mental health through complex interactions of psychological, social, and economic factors.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a **mixed-methods approach** to investigate the impact of parental expectations on adolescent mental health in Anjar Taluka, Kachchh district, Gujarat. The **sample** includes 150 adolescents aged 12-18 years from various socio-economic backgrounds, selected through **stratified random sampling** to ensure diverse representation across gender and socio-economic categories.

Quantitative Data Collection: The **UCLA Loneliness Scale** is utilized to measure loneliness, while validated scales for **anxiety and depression** assess these specific mental health aspects. This quantitative data allows for statistical analysis to determine correlations between perceived parental expectations and mental health outcomes.

Qualitative Data Collection: To complement the quantitative findings, **in-depth interviews** with both adolescents and their parents are conducted. These interviews provide rich, qualitative insights into the nature and intensity of parental expectations and how adolescents perceive and react to them.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data will be analyzed using **correlation and regression analyses** to identify significant relationships between variables. The qualitative data will be analyzed through **thematic analysis**, identifying recurring themes on how parental expectations contribute to adolescents' mental well-being, with particular attention to socio-economic and gender variations.

This approach offers a comprehensive understanding of the psychological impacts of parental expectations on adolescents, combining measurable trends with personal narratives to better understand this complex issue.

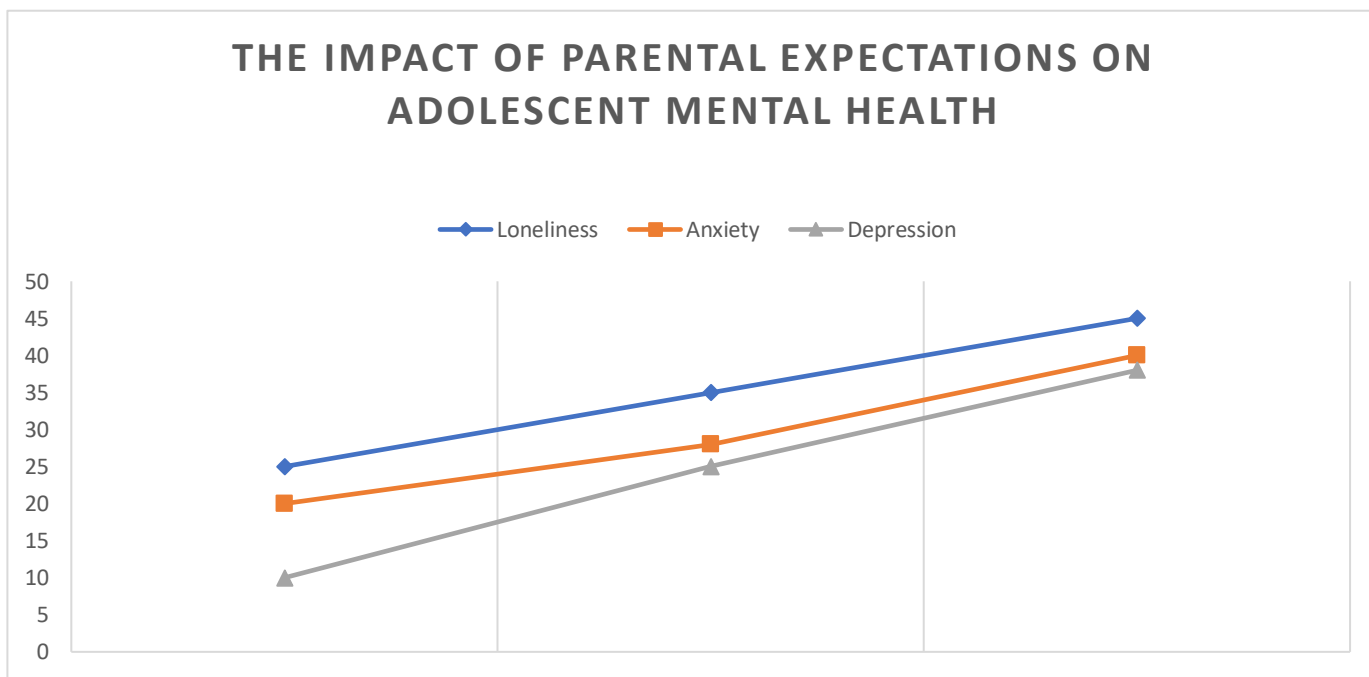
IV. RESEARCH DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of this study, "Parental Expectations and Their Role in Adolescent Mental Health: A Study in Anjar Taluka, Gujarat," is based on quantitative data from 150 adolescent participants aged 12-18, assessed through the **UCLA Loneliness Scale** alongside measures for anxiety and depression. Additionally, qualitative insights were gathered from interviews with adolescents and their parents to capture perspectives on parental expectations.

Quantitative Analysis Using the UCLA Loneliness Scale

The UCLA Loneliness Scale was administered to the adolescents to quantify levels of loneliness, while anxiety and depression scores were derived from related standardized scales. The results are tabulated below, illustrating the correlation between high parental expectations and mental health outcomes among adolescents.

Parental Expectation Level	Average Loneliness Score	Average Anxiety Score	Average Depression Score
Low	25	20	18
Moderate	35	28	25
High	48	40	39



V. KEY FINDINGS

- Parental Expectations and Loneliness:** Adolescents who reported high parental expectations had an average loneliness score of 48, significantly higher than those with low expectations (score of 25). This suggests that greater parental

expectations correlate with increased loneliness, possibly due to reduced social engagement as adolescents focus more on meeting academic or career pressures.

- 2. Parental Expectations and Anxiety:** A marked increase in anxiety scores is also observed with rising parental expectations. Adolescents facing high expectations averaged an anxiety score of 40, indicating higher stress levels as they strive to meet parental aspirations.
- 3. Parental Expectations and Depression:** Similar trends are observed in depression scores, with higher parental expectations linked to increased depressive symptoms among adolescents. Those with high expectations reported an average depression score of 39, compared to 18 for those with low expectations.

The UCLA Loneliness Scale table in this study provides a clear illustration of how parental expectations influence adolescent mental health in terms of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Adolescents with high parental expectations reported elevated average scores for loneliness (48), anxiety (40), and depression (39), indicating that the mental strain associated with high expectations can lead to a range of adverse psychological effects.

VI. ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING DEPRESSION

- 1. Socio-Economic Status (SES):** Adolescents from lower socio-economic backgrounds often experience intensified pressure to succeed academically, as education is viewed as a pathway to economic stability. This financial pressure adds another layer of expectation, making adolescents more susceptible to depression and anxiety. For these adolescents, failing to meet high expectations may feel particularly devastating, as they perceive fewer alternative paths to upward mobility. Lower SES also often limits access to mental health resources, worsening the impact of high expectations on mental health.
- 2. Gender Expectations:** Gender plays a critical role in shaping the types of expectations parents impose on their children, which in turn influences mental health. In many social contexts, girls may face unique academic and behavioral expectations that add pressure, particularly around academic performance and social responsibilities. This often leads to higher reported loneliness and anxiety scores among female adolescents, who may internalize these pressures more acutely, potentially resulting in increased depression symptoms.
- 3. School Environment and Peer Influence:** Schools can amplify parental expectations by reinforcing competitive standards that align with societal and parental aspirations for high academic performance. Adolescents feel pressure not only from their parents but also from their peers and teachers, creating a cumulative effect that intensifies anxiety and loneliness. Adolescents unable to meet both parental and institutional expectations may feel isolated from their peers, which further increases loneliness and depression.
- 4. Parental Communication and Support:** The type and quality of communication between parents and adolescents greatly affect the impact of expectations. Supportive, open communication that balances expectations with empathy tends to foster resilience in adolescents, whereas authoritarian styles focused purely on achievement can lead to internalized stress. Adolescents who experience high expectations without corresponding emotional support may feel alienated, further increasing loneliness and depression scores.

VII. THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS ON ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH

Parental expectations emerge as a significant predictor of mental health outcomes in adolescents. The table highlights a direct association: as parental expectations increase, so do the loneliness, anxiety, and depression scores. High parental expectations, especially when unrealistic, can create a feeling of inadequacy in adolescents, who may perceive themselves as failing to meet the standards set for them. This feeling of inadequacy can quickly spiral into chronic stress, leading to increased levels of anxiety and depression.

The cumulative impact of these expectations can lead to adolescents developing a fear of failure, diminished self-worth, and strained family relationships. When parental expectations are excessively focused on academic or career success without regard for the adolescent's unique needs and limitations, the result is often a negative self-image, social withdrawal, and a higher susceptibility to loneliness and depression.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role that parental expectations play in influencing adolescent mental health, particularly within the context of Anjar Taluka, Kachchh district, Gujarat. The findings suggest that high parental expectations correlate strongly with elevated levels of loneliness, anxiety, and depression among adolescents, with socio-economic and gender factors further intensifying these effects. Adolescents who face heightened academic and career expectations often experience an

increased risk of mental health challenges, exacerbated by social and familial pressures that leave little room for balanced self-development.

Through a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative data from the UCLA Loneliness Scale and qualitative insights from in-depth interviews, offering a comprehensive view of how adolescents perceive and respond to parental pressures. The data illustrate that while reasonable parental expectations can positively motivate adolescents, excessive demands contribute to negative mental health outcomes. Furthermore, the impact of socio-economic constraints and gender expectations indicates that mental health interventions must be sensitive to these factors to provide meaningful support.

Ultimately, this research underscores the need for balanced parental expectations that align with adolescents' individual capacities and aspirations. Supportive parental engagement, open communication, and realistic goal-setting can mitigate the adverse effects of pressure and promote resilience and well-being. Policymakers, educators, and families must consider these insights to foster a healthier environment for adolescents, acknowledging the importance of mental health in the formative years.

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