

Physical development and personal and social expectations among adolescents (14–18 years) a review with reference to Madhyasth Darshan

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Abstract—Adolescence is not simply a period of physical change; it is a stage in which young people begin to negotiate who they are, what they value, how they relate to others, and what they expect from family and society. The 14–18-year period is particularly significant because increasing autonomy develops alongside continuing dependence on parents, teachers and other social institutions. This narrative and thematic review brings together literature on adolescent development, parenting styles, parental expectations, aspirations, stress, adjustment, Indian sociocultural influences and educational practice. Across the reviewed studies, supportive and appropriately balanced parenting is generally associated with more favourable adjustment and well-being, while unrealistic or excessive expectations are associated with stress and maladjustment [1]–[6]. At the same time, the literature is fragmented. Parenting, expectations, stress, adjustment and academic outcomes are often examined separately, while adolescents’ own interpretations of these expectations receive less attention [7]–[10]. The review therefore identifies five related gaps: integration of major variables, representation of adolescent perspectives, cultural specificity, methodology, and explanation of the mechanisms linking expectations with adjustment. The research proposal further considers Madhyasth Darshan (Coexistence Philosophy) as a conceptual framework for examining relationships through self-understanding, justice, right conduct, responsibility and coexistence. From this perspective, adolescent education can be understood as more than preparation for academic or occupational success. It can also create space for young people, parents and educators to understand one another’s expectations and responsibilities. The review concludes by outlining a direction for empirical research on age-wise development, mutual expectations and educational content informed by Madhyasth Darshan.

Index Terms—adolescence, physical development, adolescent expectations, parental expectations, parenting, stress, holistic education, Madhyasth Darshan, value education, coexistence

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is often described as the bridge between childhood and adulthood, but the metaphor can obscure how complex this period actually is. Between 14 and 18 years, young people experience substantial physical maturation while also developing new ways of thinking, relating to others and imagining their future. Questions of identity, recognition, independence and social belonging become increasingly important. These changes make the period particularly relevant to any study of personal and social expectations.

Development during these years is shaped by the environments in which adolescents live. Family, school, peers, community, media and technology all communicate ideas about what a young person should become. Parents may place emphasis on academic achievement, discipline, obedience or career preparation, while adolescents may seek autonomy, emotional support, recognition and opportunities to make their own choices. Such expectations are not necessarily contradictory. The difficulty arises when expectations are excessive, unclear, poorly communicated or disconnected from the adolescent's developmental situation. In those circumstances, expectations can become a source of pressure rather than guidance.

The literature reviewed for this paper reflects this tension. Studies of parenting generally associate supportive and authoritative approaches with more favorable developmental outcomes, while authoritarian or neglectful patterns are more often associated with poorer adjustment [1]–[4]. Research on expectations points in a similar direction: expectations that are realistic and appropriately communicated can encourage motivation, whereas excessive expectations may contribute to stress and maladjustment [5], [6]. These findings suggest that the question is not simply whether parents or society should have expectations, but whether those expectations are understood, appropriate and developmentally meaningful.

The Indian context makes this question particularly important. Changes in family structure, exposure to wider cultural influences, educational competition and shifting social values can create differences between generations [7], [8]. At the same time, educational policy increasingly speaks of holistic development, even though everyday educational practice can remain strongly centred on examination performance, career preparation and measurable achievement. This creates a need to examine what adolescents actually experience within the space between policy ideals and everyday expectations.

Madhyasth Darshan, or the philosophy of coexistence, offers a distinct conceptual lens for considering this issue. As described in the research proposal, education is not limited to the transfer of information or development of employable skills; it is also concerned with understanding, relationships, responsibility and harmonious participation in society. The purpose of this review is therefore not to present Madhyasth Darshan as an empirically established solution, but to examine

whether its concepts can provide a useful basis for framing questions about adolescent development, mutual expectations and value-based education.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

To bring together the available literature on physical, psychological, emotional and social development during adolescence, with particular attention to the 14–18-year period.

To examine what the reviewed studies indicate about parenting styles, parental expectations, adolescent aspirations and adjustment.

To consider how differences between adolescents' expectations and the expectations of family or society may affect their developmental experience.

To identify gaps in the literature, particularly with respect to adolescent perspectives, the Indian sociocultural context, research methods and integrated explanatory frameworks.

To consider the potential of Madhyasth Darshan as a conceptual foundation for value-based adolescent education and for future empirical investigation.

III. REVIEW METHOD AND SCOPE

This paper is a narrative and thematic review prepared from the literature compiled in the accompanying Literature Review Report and PhD Research Proposal. The source material includes research articles, review papers, qualitative studies and conceptual works dealing with parenting, parental expectations, adolescent development, stress, academic well-being, aspirations, social expectations, Indian cultural practices and related developmental concerns. The material was read and organized thematically around seven broad areas: adolescent development; parenting; expectations and aspirations; adolescent perceptions and adjustment; stress and emotional well-being; Indian sociocultural influences; and educational implications. The review also considers the conceptual role assigned to Madhyasth Darshan in the research proposal. Because the present paper is based on the supplied literature and proposal rather than on newly collected data, it should be read as a review and conceptual synthesis, not as a report of empirical findings from the proposed doctoral study.

IV. ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT AND THE 14–18-YEAR PERIOD

Adolescence involves substantial biological and psychosocial change. Agarwal and Agarwal describe adolescence in Indian children as a period of biological and psychosocial vulnerability in which family support remains important [9]. Physical maturation, however, does not operate separately from the rest of development. Changes in the body can affect self-perception, confidence, social interaction and emotional experience, while the adolescent's social environment can in turn shape how these changes are understood.

The literature reviewed here suggests that adolescents become increasingly aware of themselves in relation to peers and to the expectations of significant adults. Physical appearance, social recognition and emerging ideas about future roles can therefore become intertwined. This makes physical development relevant not only to health but also to the wider context in which aspirations and expectations are formed. A meaningful educational response needs to acknowledge this connection rather than treating physical development as a separate topic.

At the same time, the two source documents contain much more discussion of parenting, expectations, stress and adjustment than of detailed age-wise physical development among Indian adolescents aged 14–18 years. This imbalance in the available literature is itself significant for the proposed doctoral study. It suggests the value of examining whether developmental differences within the 14–18 range are reflected in changing expectations, responsibilities and educational needs. Adolescence should therefore not be treated as a single, uniform category when designing educational interventions.

V. PARENTING STYLES AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

One of the clearest themes in the reviewed literature is the importance of the parenting environment. Datta and Thangbiakching report associations between parenting styles and adolescent resilience and adjustment [1]. In their correlational study, Phillips and Christian found positive associations between authoritative and permissive parenting and adolescent adjustment, while authoritarian parenting was negatively associated with adjustment [2]. Although these studies cannot establish causation, they consistently point to the quality of the parent–adolescent relationship as an important part of the developmental setting.

Hassan and Ramsiya likewise report an association between authoritative parenting and higher psychological well-being among adolescents, with differences related to family structure and community type [3]. Ahmed’s review emphasizes links between parenting style and emotional, social and academic outcomes and also notes the importance of cultural context [4]. Khosla and Sharma argue that the effects of parenting vary with age, socioeconomic status and culture, while identifying authoritative parenting as broadly adaptive [10]. Menon’s discussion of Indian child-rearing practices adds another useful dimension by describing a combination of authority, emotional support, educational emphasis and expectations of obedience [8].

Taken together, these studies support the view that parenting matters, but they also show why a simple classification of parents into “good” and “bad” styles is insufficient. What parents expect, how they communicate those expectations, and how adolescents interpret them may be just as important as the broader parenting style. This is one reason the proposed study brings parenting, expectations and adolescent experience into the same field of inquiry.

VI. PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS, ASPIRATIONS AND ADOLESCENT STRESS

Expectations can be constructive. A parent who expects a young person to study regularly, contribute to family life or behave responsibly may be communicating confidence and care. The

same expectation, however, can have a different effect if it is excessive, rigid or disconnected from the adolescent's interests and developmental capacity. The distinction is therefore not between expectation and no expectation, but between expectations that support development and expectations that become a source of pressure.

Kushwaha and Aggarwal report that moderate and realistic parental expectations can support achievement motivation and adjustment, whereas unrealistic expectations may contribute to stress and maladjustment [5]. Pathak et al. discuss high parental expectations and psychological distress in the Indian sociocultural context [6]. Similarly, Shriharsha et al., in a cross-sectional study of school-going adolescents in Karnataka, report a positive relationship between perceived parental expectations and adolescent stress [11]. These findings are important, but they should be interpreted with care because much of the available evidence is correlational or cross-sectional.

Malik's study of adolescents in rural Haryana found a significant relationship between fathers' expectations and academic achievement [12]. The study is useful in showing that expectations can be connected with educational outcomes, but its emphasis on academic achievement leaves less room for understanding the adolescent's emotional experience, wider aspirations or perceptions of the relationship with parents.

The broader implication is that expectations cannot be evaluated by their intensity alone. Their meaning depends on what is expected, why it is expected, how it is communicated, and how the adolescent understands it. An educational framework should therefore not simply advise parents to raise or lower expectations. It should help families examine whether expectations are realistic, mutually understandable and consistent with the adolescent's stage of development and responsibilities.

VII. ADOLESCENTS' ASPIRATIONS AND SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

Adolescents are not passive recipients of expectations. They form their own ideas about education, family relationships, independence, recognition, social life and future work. Their expectations may agree with those of adults in some areas and differ sharply in others. Any account of adolescent development that considers only what adults expect from young people therefore captures only one side of the relationship.

Schörner and Bittmann show that children's aspirations, their perceptions of parental aspirations and parents' actual aspirations are interrelated, pointing to a bidirectional relationship between parents and children [13]. Serneels and Dercon, using evidence from India, report that maternal aspirations are strongly associated with educational attainment and learning outcomes [14]. Hang et al. examine social expectations and young people's ability to meet them in relation to personality development [15]. Together, these studies encourage a move away from viewing expectations as a one-way transmission from adults to children.

The more useful question, therefore, is not only "What does society expect from adolescents?" but also "What do adolescents expect from family and society, and how do these expectations meet the

realities of their development?” Bringing both perspectives together may reveal areas of agreement, misunderstanding and genuine conflict that remain hidden when only one side is studied.

VIII. EXPECTATION MISMATCH AND ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING

Expectation mismatch becomes important when adolescents’ aspirations differ substantially from the expectations communicated by parents, teachers or society. Hashmi and Fayyaz, through qualitative work involving parents, teachers and students, report that emotional pressure from parents and teachers can affect academic well-being and that adolescents may experience difficulties with emotional regulation [16]. Such findings suggest that pressure is experienced within relationships and educational settings rather than arising from academic demands alone.

Across the reviewed literature, possible consequences include academic pressure, stress, emotional difficulties, maladjustment, reduced well-being and uncertainty about future roles. Yet these outcomes are usually examined separately. The literature rarely follows the full pathway from developmental change to personal expectations, from social expectations to perceived mismatch, and from that mismatch to adjustment or well-being. This missing connection is central to the proposed research. It also explains why the study seeks to examine expectations together with developmental realities rather than treating them as isolated variables.

IX. INDIAN SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT

The Indian setting deserves particular attention because family relationships, educational aspirations, social roles and cultural values shape the everyday experience of adolescence. Trivedi describes changes in Indian family structures and norms and points to possible value conflicts between parents and youth [7]. Menon similarly describes Indian child-rearing practices as combining authority and emotional support, alongside a strong emphasis on education and obedience [8]. Pathak et al. note that parental expectations are culturally shaped and may be connected with control and generational beliefs [6].

The review nevertheless reveals a cultural specificity gap. Indian values are often acknowledged in discussion but are less frequently translated into clearly defined variables that can be examined empirically. Future research therefore needs to ask more precise questions about how families understand responsibility, success, justice, right conduct and social contribution. This is also the point at which the philosophical language of Madhyasth Darshan may become relevant, provided its concepts are defined carefully enough for systematic investigation.

X. MAJOR RESEARCH GAPS

Integration Gap

Parenting style, parental expectations, adolescent aspirations, stress, adjustment and wider social expectations are usually studied in separate strands of research. The reviewed literature offers useful

pieces of the picture, but relatively few studies bring these elements together in one developmental framework.

Adolescent Perception Gap

Many studies report expectations from the perspective of parents or other adults. Adolescents' own understanding of what is expected of them—and the meaning they attach to those expectations—receives comparatively less attention. This is a significant omission when the research question concerns a possible mismatch between two sides of a relationship.

Cultural Specificity Gap

The importance of Indian sociocultural values is widely recognized, but these values are not consistently operationalized in studies of adolescent expectations and development. As a result, cultural explanations can remain descriptive rather than becoming variables that can be examined systematically.

Methodological Gap

A substantial part of the reviewed literature is cross-sectional. Such studies are useful for identifying associations, but they offer limited insight into developmental change and reciprocal influence over time. The literature would also benefit from mixed-method approaches that can place measurable patterns alongside adolescents' and parents' lived experiences.

Mechanism Gap

Stress is frequently reported in connection with parental pressure or high expectations, but its position within the broader relationship is less clear. In particular, the literature reviewed for this paper does not adequately explain how parenting and expectations may contribute to stress and how stress, in turn, may be related to adjustment. This unresolved mechanism deserves closer investigation.

XI. MADHYASTH DARSHAN AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Madhyasth Darshan, described in the research proposal as the philosophy of coexistence, provides a philosophical basis for thinking about relationships among the individual, family and society. Within the proposal's framework, development is viewed in an integrated way, involving the individual, the body, relationships and social responsibility. This orientation is relevant to the present review because the research problem itself concerns a relationship between personal development and social expectations.

A notable feature of this perspective is its emphasis on understanding rather than relying primarily on control. From the framework presented in the proposal, education is expected to support understanding of the self, relationships, responsibilities and coexistence, in addition to academic learning and skill development. This makes it possible to ask a different educational question: rather

than asking only how adolescents can be made to meet expectations, how can adolescents and adults understand the basis of their expectations and responsibilities toward one another?

For adolescents, such a framework may offer an alternative to approaches that interpret developmental difficulty mainly through compliance, performance or behavioural correction. Its potential contribution, however, remains a matter for examination. The present review therefore treats Madhyasth Darshan as a conceptual and philosophical framework for the proposed research, not as a conclusion established by the literature reviewed.

XII. THE CHILD AS A SEEKER OF JUSTICE: A PROPOSED PERSPECTIVE

An important proposition emerging from the research proposal is that parents should try to understand the child in terms of fundamental human tendencies rather than evaluating the child primarily through performance, achievement or conformity. In the Madhyasth Darshan perspective articulated in the proposal, the child is described as: “बच्चा जन्म से न्याय का याचक, सही कार्य-व्यवहार करने का इच्छुक और सत्य वक्ता होता है” In English, this may be rendered as: “From birth, a child is a seeker of justice, inclined toward right action and right conduct, and a speaker of truth.” This statement is best treated as a philosophical proposition requiring careful definition and empirical examination; it should not be presented as an established finding of the literature reviewed here.

If future research provides evidence supporting this proposition, it could have implications for both parenting and education. Parents and educators might then look beyond the assumption that adolescents are primarily resistant, undisciplined or driven by external attractions and examine the conditions under which orientations toward justice, right conduct and truth are expressed or suppressed. Such an approach could also strengthen the idea of reciprocal responsibility: adults have responsibilities toward adolescents, while adolescents gradually learn to understand and fulfil their responsibilities toward family and society. This reciprocal view is consistent with the broader aim of studying expectations in both directions.

XIII. IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Adolescents need age-appropriate opportunities to understand physical changes and to consider how these changes may interact with emotional and social experiences.

Students can be encouraged to identify their own expectations and to examine what parents, teachers and society expect from them.

Educational programmes can create structured opportunities for adolescents and parents to discuss expectations openly instead of leaving important assumptions unspoken.

Students may be guided to examine decisions in relation to relationships, responsibility, justice and the wider consequences of their actions.

The research proposal gives particular importance to practice-based learning, including family service, institutional participation, self-practice and social responsibility. Such practices can be explored as educational experiences rather than simply as activities to be completed.

Personal development and social responsibility need not be treated as separate educational goals. They can be connected through learning about relationships, responsibility and coexistence.

XIV. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Taken together, the literature and the philosophical orientation of the research proposal suggest a possible sequence for future empirical investigation. The sequence is intended as a working framework rather than a claim of established causation:

Adolescent developmental context → physical development (14–18 years) → growing self-awareness and personal aspirations → family and societal expectations → adolescent perception of those expectations → alignment or mismatch with developmental realities → stress, adjustment, emotional balance and social behaviour → value-based understanding and right evaluation → Madhyasth Darshan-based educational content → understanding of mutual responsibilities and more harmonious social participation.

This sequence brings together variables that have generally been examined separately in the reviewed literature. It remains a proposed conceptual model and will require empirical testing before any causal interpretation can be justified.

XV. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies should examine developmental differences within the 14–18-year period instead of treating adolescence as a completely homogeneous stage.

Data should, where feasible, be obtained from more than one stakeholder group—including adolescents, parents and teachers—so that the analysis does not depend on a single perspective.

Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches could help researchers identify measurable patterns while also understanding how adolescents and adults experience expectations in everyday life.

Researchers should distinguish between realistic and supportive expectations and expectations that are excessive, unrealistic or experienced as pressure. Treating all expectations as equivalent may conceal important differences in their effects.

Concepts drawn from Madhyasth Darshan should be defined and operationalized carefully. This will allow philosophical propositions to be examined through systematic research rather than being treated as assumptions.

Intervention studies could examine whether educational content centred on self-understanding, justice, right conduct, responsibility and coexistence is associated with changes in adolescent well-being and family–social relationships.

XVI. CONCLUSION

The literature reviewed in this paper points to adolescence, and particularly the 14–18-year period, as a stage in which physical maturation, emotional experience, relationships, aspirations and social

participation develop together. Parenting, parental expectations and wider social expectations form part of the environment in which these changes take place. The available studies generally associate supportive and appropriately balanced parenting with better adjustment and well-being, while unrealistic expectations and excessive pressure are more often associated with stress and maladjustment.

The more significant finding from the review, however, is the fragmentation of the existing evidence. Parenting style, expectations, stress, adjustment and adolescent perceptions are often examined as separate topics. The Indian sociocultural context is important but is not consistently operationalized, and there is limited translation of developmental findings into integrated educational content. These gaps support the need for a study that brings developmental realities and mutual expectations into the same analytical frame.

Madhyasth Darshan offers a potentially useful conceptual language for that inquiry because it places emphasis on self-understanding, justice in relationships, right conduct, responsibility and coexistence. Its value for adolescent education should nevertheless be established through careful conceptual definition and empirical investigation. The framework is most useful when it helps generate questions that can be examined rather than when it is treated as a conclusion in advance.

One proposition from the research proposal deserves particular attention: parents may be able to understand the child as a seeker of justice, inclined toward right action and right conduct, and a speaker of truth—“बच्चा जन्म से न्याय का याचक, सही कार्य-व्यवहार करने का इच्छुक और सत्य वक्ता होता है।” If future research supports this proposition, it could provide a meaningful basis for rethinking how adults interpret children’s behaviour and how expectations are formed within the family. At the present stage, however, it remains a philosophical proposition to be investigated, not an empirical conclusion established by this review.

The broader direction suggested by the review is therefore a shift from expectation-driven education toward understanding-driven education. Such an approach would take physical development seriously while also attending to personal aspirations, family relationships, social responsibility and human values. The proposed Madhyasth Darshan-based framework may contribute to this effort by placing mutual understanding and harmonious participation alongside academic and career preparation. Its ultimate usefulness will depend on how clearly its concepts can be translated into educational practice and tested through systematic research.

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