

# Exploring The Dynamics Between the Sex of a Child and Parental Control

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## Abstract

*This study aims to investigate the dynamics of the difference in perceived parental control based on the sex of a child in the Indian context. The target population of the study in question is people from 18 to 26 years old. The examination of the interrelations between the mother and the father with his or her son or daughter may lead to the discovery of any trends associated with quantity changes in the power of the parent, and how gender affects the scenario. The research employs quantitative analysis. The purpose of this study is to increase the likelihood of a more proactive approach to understanding family dynamics and gender perceptions in India.*

*Parental control consists of the strategies, standards, and conduct that parents use to control and direct their children's behavior and growth while in the family scenario. This control can be expressed by setting rules and limitations for children, monitoring their daily activities, and providing guidance and discipline. There are variations in the amount and form of parental control due to cultural norms. Overall, parental control is about establishing the general well-being, development and socialization of young people while guiding their agency and autonomy. Among 150 participants there were 75 males and females respectively. After analysis of the data parametric t-test was done. It was observed that there is no significance. Hence this means that the null hypothesis will be accepted which concludes that there is no dynamics between parental control and the sex of a child.*

**Keywords:** Parental Control, Parental Authority, Boundaries, Monitoring Activities, Family Dynamics.

## 1. Introduction

Parents play a significant role in the growth and development of their children by creating a nurturing environment for the children's emotional, social, and intellectual growth. Parental control contains various strategies, standards, and conduct that are used by parents to help direct their children's behavior in a family setting. For decades scientists have been conducting studies on parental practices that impact children's psychological, cognitive, and social growth. Parental control influences have a huge effect on child development, and these consequences might be good or detrimental based on the intervention. (Shek, D. T. L., Zhu, X., & S, C. M., MA., 2018).

Parental control has a significant and versatile influence on the development of a child. In the current situation, there is evidence that the right behaviour management approach is beneficial with their consequences being lower risky behaviour or good emotional health. On the other hand, psychological control is described as

excessive and it is observed that children on whom it is observed suffer from of anxiety and depression (Park and Han, 2020).

Parental control may differ from culture to culture, affecting relationships, values, and parenting practices. Knowing the significance of interaction between parents, child development, and culture is important for understanding the complexities of families and promoting healthy parent-child relationships.

It has two aspects namely, behavioural control and psychological control. Behaviour management means establishing explicit instructions and monitoring children's activities to encourage discipline. Psychological control, on the other hand, affects children's feelings and emotions, usually through strategies such as guilt or withdrawal of love in order to comply with parents' expectations and values (Lansford, J. E., 2021).

An article by Lansford, J. E., PhD. (2021) termed "What are

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they and why are they important for children's development?" states that controlled parenting behaviours are associated with better child development outcomes. For example, children and adolescents are less likely to indulge in drugs and engage in risky activities if parents set rules and boundaries on what they can do. In contrast, parental psychological control is associated with poorer child development outcomes. For example, the use of psychological manipulation techniques with children creates a greater potential for them to experience anxiety and depression. Two strategies involved in psychological control are guilt (making the child feel guilty if the child does not share the parent's thoughts and feelings) and affection withdrawal (making the child unloved if the parent's thoughts and feelings are not shared). It also states that despite the generalization, there are also some cultural differences. In particular, behaviour control is more common in some cultures than others and behaviour control may decline over time because children in some cultures behave less well than others, thus growing more quickly within the culture and related to other aspects of parenting, in different ways across cultures.

In Indians, parental control is important in terms of culture, family tradition and social expectations. In India, parental control often manifests itself through a combination of behavioural and psychological strategies designed to shape children's behaviour, decision-making, and overall development.

Cultural Atlas published an article called "Indian -Family" in 2018 which states that in Indian households, behavioural control commonly involves establishing strict rules and expectations regarding academic performance, career choices, social interactions, even marriage. Parents may closely monitor their child's activities, including friendships, leisure pursuits, and online interactions, to ensure cultural and moral standards adherence.

Nida Sheriff, 2017, in a Medium article pointed out that Psychological control in Indian families manifests through the imposition of traditional values, beliefs, and expectations on children through guilt induction or emotional manipulation. Children may feel pressure to conform to parental wishes and societal norms, causing internal conflicts and challenges in identity development.

However, it should not be forgotten that parental control in Indian society is not the same in every family and may vary depending on factors such as economic conditions, urban-rural conflict, and generational change (Sondhi, R., 2017). Although traditional and hierarchical family systems still affect many Indian families, there is a growing trend towards social care and childcare, especially in urban areas and for young girls.

Overall, parental control in Indian society reflects the interplay of cultural norms, societal expectations and changing parenting practices, with consequences for children's well-being, freedom and health.

The sex of a child can sometimes create a variance in the level of control exerted by a parent.

In a study by Endendijk et al., 2016, it was discovered that parents seemed to be marginally more controlling with boys than with girls, but the effect size was negligible. They claimed that there is a significant effect of time because in studies published in the 1970s and 1980s, they reported autonomy-supportive strategies with boys than with girls but from 1990 it was seemed that girls enjoyed more autonomy-supportive behaviour than boys. But based on the present study there was no significant gender differentiated control.

Begum, Grossman and Islam, 2018 also conducted a study in Bangladesh which showed similar results. They concluded that there was a bias for and against boys and girls but no systematic bias was shown by either parent.

In some societies or cultures, traditional gender roles and expectations can lead to differential parental interaction and management of their children based on their gender. For example, in a patriarchal society, boys tend to have more freedom and independence than girls, who are generally subjected to stricter rules. These different treatments may reflect beliefs about gender roles; While boys are often expected to follow the family's name or history, girls may be seen as needing protection or guidance to maintain their virtue or respect.

For example, gender differences in parental control may be less in some matriarchal or egalitarian societies, where parents provide equal opportunities to teach and shape the behaviour of all children regardless of gender.

Shek in 2007 in a longitudinal study observed there was notable variations in parental control and relational dynamics based on parent and child gender. The findings underscore the complexity of parent-adolescent relationships and highlight the need for nuanced understanding and support in navigating familial dynamics during the formative adolescent years.

Wmoyi et al., 2011, stated that parenting through control and monitoring has been found to affect young people's sexual behaviour. Girls mainly those still in school received more supervision compared to boys.

Russell et al., 1998, on the other hand, discovered that authoritarian styles were more likely to be used when parenting boys while authoritative style of reasoning/ induction when parenting girls. Unlike Endendijk in 2024 who discovered that parents use more negative control with boys than with girls but the effect was small.

However, it is important to know that these changes are not universal and may vary depending on cultural factors, socioeconomic status, good education, and strong families. Additionally, awareness of the development and advocacy of gender equality will lead to changes in parental management towards treating all children equally, not gender.

The dynamics between the sex of a child and parental control are complex and multifaceted. It reflects cultural influences

and changing social dynamics around gender roles and family expectations. Improving one's understanding and promoting equality can lead to healthy and harmonious family relationships in the face of adversity.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Objective

The purpose of the research is to focus on the detailed analysis of the relationship between the sex of a child and of parental control. In the context of the work, I am going to investigate how the sex of the child may determine the application of such parental control strategies as behaviours, rules, and expectations. It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that the research will be also focused on the factors that explain such interrelations, including cultural differences and the perceptions of parents concerning the distinctions of the two sexes. As a result, the research may shed light on the specific cultural stereotypes, affecting the children-parent interactions. Additionally, such an approach may also help to analyze the results and utilize the data to improve the application of relevant strategies that can be emphasized to be fair and helpful for both parties and focused on their further development with references to the elimination of inequalities that are now characterizing relationships between parents and children.

### 2.2 Operational Definition

Parental Control refers to a myriad of strategies, rules, and behaviours that parents use to guide and regulate their children's behaviour, perception, and development in the family context. Specifically, it involves both behavioural and psychological control, which suggests not only controlling one's behaviour but also setting clear rules, monitoring the situation, and regulating one's emotions, thoughts, and feelings.

### 2.3 Hypothesis

Alternative Hypothesis(H1)- There is a significant relationship between the sex of a child and parental control.

Null Hypothesis(H0)- There is no significant relationship between the sex of a child and parental control.

### 2.4 Sample

The study was conducted on 150 adults of the age range 18-25

years. There was equal distribution with 50% male and 50% female participants. All participants were either undergraduate or postgraduate students. People who already have existing psychological issues would be excluded. People who can understand English were preferred for the study.

### 2.5 Tool used for Data Collective

Parental Control Scale (PCS) was used for the study. The scale was developed by Rohner & Khaleque in 1989. The PCS is a 13-item self-report questionnaire assessing children's and adults' perceptions of the behavioural control they experience(d) as children (or control administered to children by their parents). Items in all versions of the PCS are scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale. The scale has the reliability of .73 which indicates a high level of internal consistency. The scale has both content and construct validity.

### 2.6 Procedure

The Parental Control Scale (PCS) by Rohner & Khaleque was selected. Some participants were given a Google Form questionnaire which was distributed on social media platforms, while others received physical copies of the same questionnaire. Upon completion, responses were first manually scored as per the scoring of the scale. Then SPSS was used for further quantitative analysis. Ethical considerations were followed through informed consent obtained from participants and assurances of confidentiality provided.

### 2.7 Statistics

All the collected data was statistically analysed. The statistical techniques used in this study were chosen to provide robust and reliable insights into the dynamics between the sex of a child and parental control, helping to advance understanding in this important area of research. Parametric, t-test was used to help reach the conclusion. SPSS was used to help with the analysis.

## 3. Result

Result Table 1

Showing tests of normality of Parental Level Of Control (Father and Mother)

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Fathers' level of control	.988	150	.221
Mothers' level of control	.969	150	.002

This table indicates Fathers' level of control is insignificant while Mothers' level of control is significant.

Result Table 2

Showing tests of homogeneity of variances of Parental Level Of Control (Father and Mother)

	Levene Statistic	Sig.
Fathers' level of control	1.175	.280
Mothers' level of control	1.717	.192

This table indicates both Fathers' and Mothers' level of control is insignificant

Result Table 3

Showing difference between Male and Female participants on Fathers' Level Of Control

	Sex of participant	Mean	Std. Deviation	t values	Sig.
Fathers' level of control	Female	29.73	5.750	-.294	.280
	Male	30.01	5.917		

This table indicates that there is no significant difference between Female and Male participants. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted.

Result Table 4

Showing difference between Male and Female participants on Mothers' Level Of Control

	Sex of participant	Mean	Std. Deviation	t values	Sig.
Mothers' level of control	Female	28.68	6.443	-1.782	.192
	Male	30.68	7.277		

This table indicates that there is no significant difference between Female and Male participants. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted.

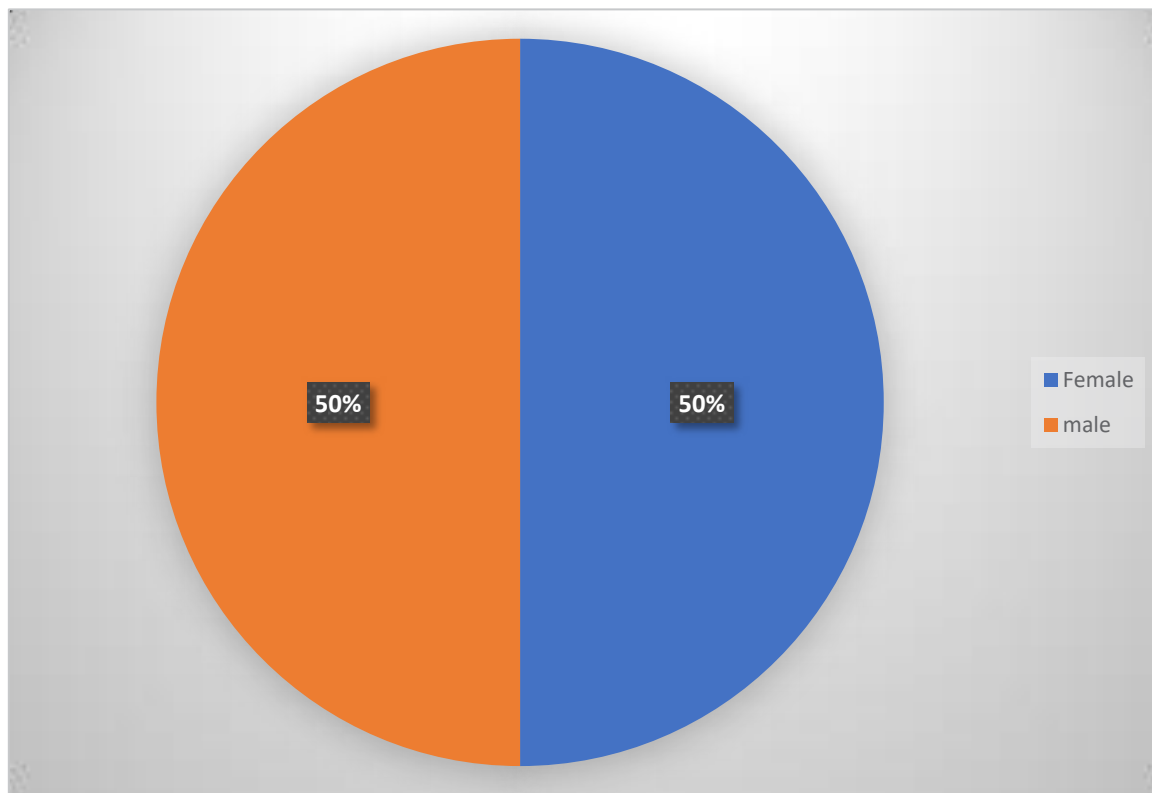
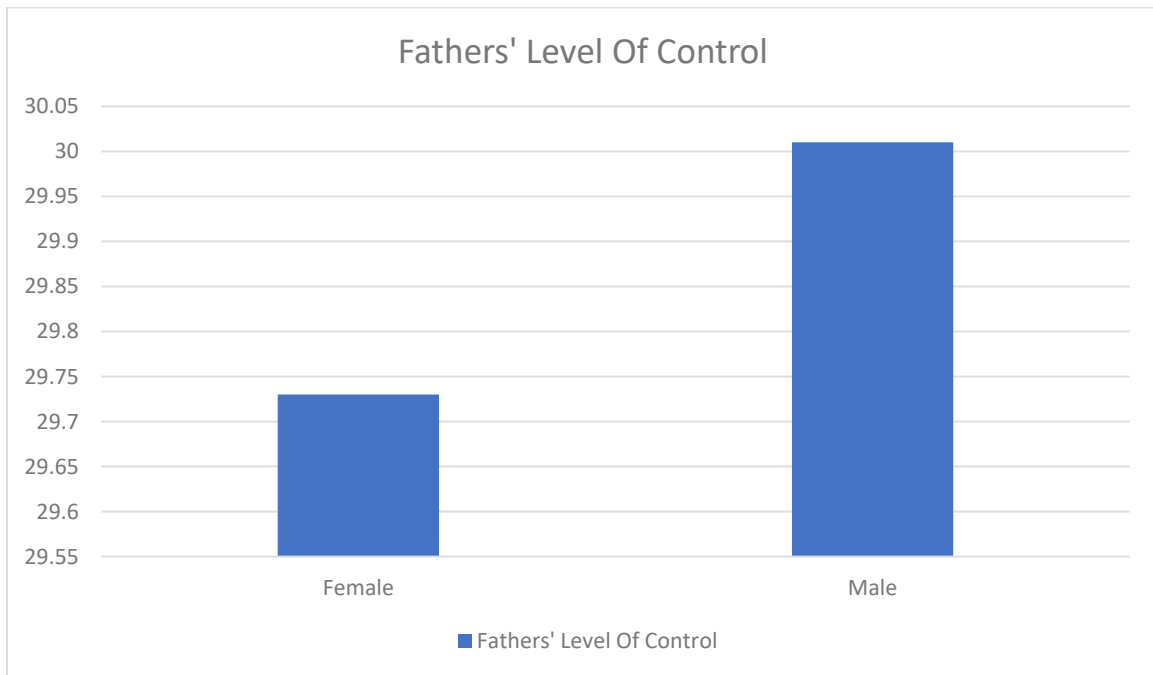
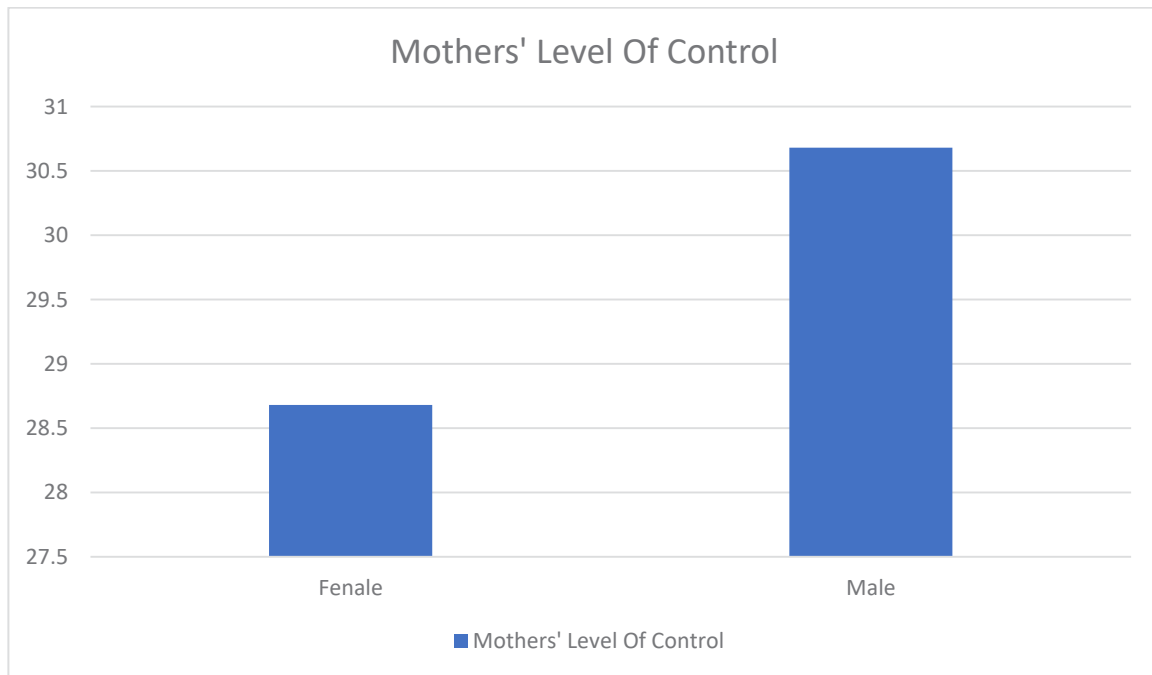


Figure 1: Showing a pictorial representation of the sex of the participants



**Figure 2:** Showing a graphical representation of Fathers' Level Of Control



**Figure 3:** Showing a graphical representation of Mothers' Level Of Control

#### 4. Discussion

The term "parental control" describes the variety of tactics, guidelines, and actions parents take to manage and shape their kids' conduct, choices, and growth in the home. Parental behaviours have been the subject of psychology research for many years because of the effects they have on children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. The impact of parental control on a child's growth is profound. Depending on the degree of involvement, it can have

both positive and negative effects.

It comprises behavioral control and psychological control, two separate but related domains. In order to instill discipline and encourage responsible behavior, behavioral control involves the monitoring of children's activities and the setting of clear guidelines. Conversely, psychological control is molding children's beliefs and feelings to conform to parental expectations

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and ideals, frequently by using strategies like love withholding or guilt induction.

Better child development results are typically correlated with parents' behavioral control. For instance, if parents enforce restrictions and boundaries on their behavior (such as curfews for arriving home by a specific time, or telling parents where they are going and who they will be with), then children and adolescents are less likely to use drugs and participate in risky behaviors.

On the other hand, poorer child development results are typically associated with parents' psychological control. For example, if parents employ psychologically manipulative techniques to shape their children's thoughts and feelings, then children and adolescents are more prone to experience anxiety and depression. Guilt induction, which makes kids feel bad if they don't share their parents' feelings, and love withdrawal, which makes kids feel unwanted if they don't share their parents' feelings, are two frequent psychological control techniques.

Parental Control Scale (PCS) which was developed by Ronald Preston Rohner and Abdul Khaliq was used in this study. The scale is a 13-item self-report questionnaire on adults' perceptions of the behavioral control they experienced as children. It is scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale.

The scoring of each questionnaire was done manually as per the instructions of the test. The analysis was done on SPSS.

The PCS was conceptually designed in such a way that scores from 13 to 26 indicate low/lax control (permissiveness); 27 to 39, moderate control; 40 to 45, firm control; and 46 to 52, strict/restrictive control. In effect, scores in the low/lax control range signify that parents rarely try to control the youth's behavior. Rather, they allow their offspring to regulate their own activities to the greatest extent possible. Scores in the moderate control range indicate that is, parents are flexible in their control, insisting on compliance with parental wishes in some contexts but allowing youth considerable latitude in regulating their own activities in other contexts. Scores in the firm control range signify that parents usually try to control their youth's behavior. These parents are very demanding and directive—although not unyielding—of their children's behavior. Finally, scores in the strict/restrictive range signify that parents almost always try to control the youth's behavior. Restrictive parents demand strict, unyielding obedience, and total compliance with parental directives.

According to the data, as shown in Result Tables 3 and 4, the mean of both Fathers' Level of Control and Mothers' Level of Control for both females and males fall between 27 to 39 indicating moderate control. In the Fathers' Level of Control, there is no significant difference between females and males ( $p = .280$ ). No significant difference was seen in Mothers' Level of Control between females and males ( $p = .192$ ).

In a study done by Endendijk, Groeneveld, Bakermans-Kranenburg & Mesman in 2016 in Germany, it was observed that there were minimal differences in parental control behaviors based on gender, with slightly more controlling behaviors observed towards boys but with a negligible effect size. While in this study moderate levels of control were exerted by parents over both sons and daughters, with no significant differences in control behaviors based on gender. While Endendijk and the rest focused on autonomy-supportive and controlling strategies and identified a shift in parenting practices over time, this study primarily examined the level of control exerted by parents without considering specific parenting strategies or changes over time.

Both studies suggest that parents generally do not significantly differentiate their control behaviors based on the gender of their children, albeit within different cultural contexts and with some methodological differences.

Different societies have their cultural norms namely being individualistic or collectivistic with India like many other Asian countries leaning towards collectivistic. Indian society stands out from many other societies in its approach to parental control due to its deeply ingrained cultural norms and values. The collectivist nature of Indian culture, emphasizes the importance of family cohesion and societal harmony. In Indian families, parents often wield significant authority over their children, with decisions being made collectively and with the family's interests taking precedence over individual autonomy. This collective mindset shapes parental control dynamics, leading to a higher level of control within the family unit compared to societies that prioritize individualism.

Furthermore, Indian society places a strong emphasis on hierarchy and respect for authority, particularly within the family structure. Parents are typically regarded as the primary authority figures, responsible for guiding and disciplining their children. This hierarchical dynamic contributes to a culture of obedience and deference to parental authority, resulting in stricter parental control compared to societies with more egalitarian family structures.

So it can be said that the exhibition of distinct cultural characteristics might have influenced parental control responses and the way and degree to which it is perceived. This highlights the enduring influence of cultural values on parenting behaviors in India.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, the present study investigates a complicated interplay between the sex of a child and parental control. There is no empirical evidence to conclude that the sex of a child is somehow related to the approaches of parental control. While sociocultural norms and expectations may be affecting parents in their behaviours, there is no difference in how boys and girls are reared. Both sexes of a child may pose specific challenges or difficulties that need to be addressed using effective parenting techniques. Grammatical error the dynamics within a family is required that acknowledges a wide range of factors that have to be considered when theorizing

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parenting techniques. By deepening our understanding, we can foster a more positive parent-child relationship to increase overall development and satisfaction.

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