



The Relationship Between A Mother's Self-Perception and Her Child's Attitude

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Abstract: This article examines the relationship between a woman's self-perception as a mother and her adolescent child's attitude toward her. It analyzes how a woman's maternal self-image is reflected in her child's attitude and behavior toward her.

Keywords: Woman, adolescent, "self-image," "ideal mother" image, perception, quality, characteristic, relationship, behavior.

Introduction: Marriage objectively leads to changes in the social status of both men and women and, consequently, to new social roles. These changes significantly influence a person's "self-concept," i.e., their generalized self-perception and the system of self-directed attitudes [6]. Particularly, becoming a parent necessitates changes in one's self-image and criteria for self-evaluation [5].

Psychology has accumulated extensive evidence that the characteristics of a person's self-concept are directly connected to their attitudes toward others and are associated with a wide range of psychological traits. S.G. Yakobson and S.M. Moreva discovered that even at preschool age, a structured "self-image" significantly influences children's moral behavior [7].

In general, numerous studies confirm that the self-concept holds a significant place among the psychological factors influencing behavior in interpersonal relationships. However, the role of this factor in parent-child relationships has not been sufficiently studied. Most research in this area focuses on how different parental attitudes affect the development of the child's self-perception. For example, O.P. Makushina found that adolescents who feel strongly dependent on their parents show no

cognitive distinction between their ideal and real self-concepts [4]. According to R. Burns, authoritarian parental behavior can hinder the development of a positive self-concept in children, leading to emotionally unstable self-perception [3].

Data collected in psychological studies confirm that the self-concept manifests itself in a person’s relationship with others, and that family relations play a crucial role in shaping this psychological structure. Some authors recommend that parents' ability to build appropriate relationships with their children largely depends on how adequate their own parental self-concept is [5, 1]. However, such practical recommendations often lack clearly presented empirical foundations.

Special studies have explored parental ideas about the “ideal parent,” particularly through T. Leary’s methodology. In K.N. Belogay’s research, it was found that, according to self-assessments, fathers associated the ideal father with dominance, while mothers

associated the ideal mother with friendliness [2].

In our research, we studied this direction in depth — specifically, the relationship between mothers’ self-concepts as mothers and the quality of their relationship with their adolescent children. For the empirical study, T. Leary’s "Interpersonal Diagnosis Questionnaire" was used to evaluate the degree of congruence and divergence between the mothers’ self-image and their perception of the “ideal mother.” A total of 112 women participated. Additionally, N.I. Shevandrin’s “Analysis of the Student’s Socio-Psychological Connections” method was employed to assess how 112 adolescents evaluated their relationships with their mothers.

While previous studies have investigated the content of ideal parent representations among men and women, how these perceptions are reflected in children’s attitudes toward their parents has not been specifically examined. Our research reveals a distinctive interaction between these psychological structures.

Table 1

Indicators of adolescent attitudes toward mothers with predominantly negative perceptions of themselves as mothers compared to their ideal mother image (based on average values)

№	Octant Dominant Poles	Criteria of Attitudes Toward the Mother and Their Distribution Indicators						
		Consult with her	I value her opinion	She can be trusted	I believe she understands	I believe she will help	I believe she will protect	I want to imitate her
1	Dominance	0,63	0,71	1,02	0,54	0,68	1,22	0,34
2	Superiority	1,68	1,24	1,33	0,61	1,72	1,84	1,78
3	Aggressiveness	0,31	0,43	0,41	0,25	0,48	1,32	0,37
4	Skepticism	1,39	0,45	0,54	0,23	0,51	0,41	0,25
5	Obedience	0,83	1,37	1,21	1,35	1,54	0,29	0,32
6	Submissiveness	0,22	0,31	0,40	1,72	0,38	0,41	0,44
7	Conventionality	1,89	1,21	1,04	1,78	1,91	1,64	0,42
8	Tolerance	1,92	1,74	1,83	1,94	1,97	1,03	1,32

As can be seen from the quantitative indicators presented in the table above, adolescents whose mothers rated themselves higher than the "ideal

mother" in characteristics associated with the “dominance,” “aggressiveness,” and “submissiveness” octants showed low levels of consultation (0.63), (0.31),

and (0.22) respectively. Adolescents were more inclined to seek advice from mothers characterized by “assertiveness,” “skepticism,” “conventionality,” and “tolerance.” However, adolescents inclined to consult with assertive mothers (1.68) expressed low confidence in their mothers’ understanding (0.61). Similarly, although adolescents tend to consult with skeptical mothers (1.39), they do not highly value their opinions (0.45) or believe in their ability to understand them (0.23).

It was found that only mothers characterized by “conventionality” (a tendency to display friendly, agreeable behavior) and “tolerance” (extreme compassion and ostentatious altruism) could inspire both consultation and trust in their opinions and understanding from their adolescent children.

Apart from the trait of “tolerance,” adolescents also expressed that they valued the opinions of mothers with “obedience” (1.37), although they lacked confidence in these mothers’ ability to protect them (0.29). In our opinion, adolescents may pay attention to the views of such mothers—who tend to be entirely obedient, feel perpetually guilty, and prone to self-deprecation—out of compassion, but likely conclude that it is unreasonable to expect strong protection from individuals with such traits.

Only adolescents of mothers who demonstrated the quality of “tolerance” expressed high trust in their mothers, although even in these cases, adolescents only gave a moderate score (1.03) when asked about the mothers’ ability to protect them. Additionally, the children of mothers characterized by “skepticism” and “submissiveness” expressed doubts about their mothers’ protective ability (both had an average score of 0.41). We believe this is due to the adolescent’s

uncertainty about whether a highly suspicious or conformist mother would be able to take their side when the situation requires it.

Interestingly, the children of mothers who rated themselves highly in “dominance” scored relatively high in trust regarding their mother's ability to protect them (1.22), more so than other indicators. Most noteworthy is that children of mothers who considered themselves superior to the ideal mother in “assertiveness” expressed a high level of confidence (1.72) in their mother's protective abilities. We interpret this result as being associated with the trait of assertiveness, where individuals strive to demonstrate their well-developed characteristics and take independent positions in a group. Indeed, when it comes to defending someone, it often requires opposing those with different positions. Moreover, protecting someone provides a favorable opportunity to assert and confirm one's superiority in the eyes of others and, first and foremost, in one's own perception.

Another noteworthy point is that children of mothers who rated themselves higher than the ideal mother in the trait of “obedience” showed high confidence (1.54) in their mothers' ability to provide help but expressed low confidence in their protective ability. We believe this reflects the adolescents’ awareness that these mothers, who constantly feel guilty and tend to be self-deprecating, may be able to offer emotional support and consolation, but lack the capacity for active protection and confrontation.

The findings of our study show that when a woman identifies traits in herself close to those of the “Ideal Mother,” the adolescent’s attitude toward her also differs qualitatively.

Table 2

Adolescents’ Attitudes Toward Mothers with Positive Dominance of the "Me as a Mother" Image Over the "Ideal Mother" Image
(Based on average values)

№	Dominant Poles of the Octants	Criteria of Attitudes Toward the Mother and Their Distribution Indicators
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		Consult with her	I value her opinion	iShe can be trusted	I believe she understands	I believe she will help	I believe she will protect	I want to imitate her
1	Leadership	1,98	1,83	1,79	1,85	1,78	1,81	1,23
2	Independence	1,83	1,72	1,69	1,73	1,67	1,89	1,91
3	Bluntness	1,05	1,64	1,75	1,78	1,81	1,75	1,56
4	Distrust	1,12	1,85	1,79	1,71	1,69	1,54	1,63
5	Shyness	1,01	1,13	1,45	1,79	1,75	0,83	0,75
6	Dependence	0,84	0,93	1,58	1,69	0,73	0,51	0,62
7	Cooperation	1,89	1,65	1,78	1,88	1,91	1,83	1,89
8	Responsibility	1,58	1,72	1,88	1,64	1,92	1,94	1,78

In particular, children of women who rated themselves relatively high in leadership expressed a readiness to consult with their mothers, take their opinions into account, trust them, and not doubt their help and protection.

A similar pattern can be observed among women who rated themselves as close to their image of the ideal woman in such traits as independence, cooperation, informedness, and partially distrust. However, several noteworthy observations were identified in other octants. For instance, children of women who described themselves as having qualities such as bluntness, outspokenness, and sincerity evaluated the likelihood of consulting with their mothers lower compared to other criteria. We believe this can be explained by the fact that individuals who are accustomed to direct and concise expression may sometimes create discomfort in others in certain situations. Indeed, even in daily life, people often refrain from seeking advice when they anticipate hearing a harsh or overly honest opinion from their interlocutor.

A similar situation was observed with the trait of shyness. In our view, shyness and modesty may prevent a person from expressing thoughts and opinions that could be useful for someone seeking advice due to internal conflicts. Furthermore, the interlocutor's awareness of this trait can complicate mutual engagement in such interactions. Likewise, in the cases of shyness and dependence, we see that adolescents tend not to highly evaluate the possibility

of receiving support from individuals who lack self-confidence and heavily rely on the trust of others.

Thus, we have grounds to recognize specific interrelations between women's self-perceptions as mothers and the nature of adolescent children's attitudes toward them. At the same time, it is particularly interesting to observe significant differences in adolescents' overall attitudes—based on openness and trust—toward mothers whose self-perceptions in certain traits differ from those of the ideal mother.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the degree to which a woman's self-image as a mother differs from her personal image of the ideal mother may serve as a unique psychodiagnostic criterion for making initial hypotheses regarding the characteristics of adolescents' attitudes toward their mothers.

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