The concept of emotional autonomy has always been a major area of interest to researchers working in the field of adolescent psychology. There has been a continuous effort by the researchers in defining explaining and exploring the multidimensional characteristics associated with adolescent emotional autonomy. They have tried to examine interrelationships between the aspects of autonomy and even the influence of familial and non-familial roles on the development of responsible autonomy. A brief review of the relevant studies based on the available literature is presented in this chapter.

For convenience these studies have been summarized under the following headings.

2.1 Emotional autonomy and parent-adolescent relationship
2.2 Emotional autonomy and peer relationship
2.3 Emotional autonomy and psychosocial adjustment
2.4 Gender differences in emotional autonomy
2.5 Emotional autonomy and other familial variables

2.1 EMOTIONAL AUTONOMY AND PARENT-ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIP

Parents play a vital role in adolescents’ development. Parents cannot be present to guide their adolescents’ behavior at all times. Parents then must allow their adolescents to make their own decisions and attitudes, so that adolescents can feel responsible for their own lives. The way in which autonomy is negotiated vis-à-vis the parent-adolescent relationship has been a primary focus of theory and research on adolescent development. There are several aspects within the parent-adolescent relationship that can influence an individual’s effort to become autonomous. Primarily, it includes adolescent’s attachment and connection with parents, the interaction and communication patterns and the styles of parenting.

Studies on parent-child relationship during the adolescent period have repeatedly shown that the transition into adolescence accompanies a transformation in parent-adolescent relationship (Maccoby, 1984, Steinberg, 1990; Youniss and Smollar, 1985; Grotevant, 1998) which predominantly occurs as a function of the development of the adolescents’ autonomy (Steinberg, 1990; Collins et al., 1997a, 1997b, Noom et al., 1999). Adolescent’s redefine their roles and seek an equalitarian parent-child relationship. The
growing sense of autonomy and independence promotes adolescents to exercise more control over their thoughts, emotions and activities and to be more critical of their parents’ values and beliefs.

Developmental shifts in metacognitive and representational capacity that occur during adolescence (Case, 1985; Selman, 1980; Chalmers and Lawrence, 1993) promote a more highly differentiated and complex view of the self and others (Harter, 1990; Marsh, 1989; Moretti and Higgins, 1999). With increased cognitive maturity adolescents gain the capacity to revaluate and potentially “deidealize” their parents— to see them in both positive and negative ways (Blos, 1979; Fuhrman and Holmbeck, 1995; Lamborn and Steinberg 1993; Ryan and Lynch, 1989; Steinberg, 2005). Frank et al. (1988) observed that parental deidealization by adolescents as responsible for promotion of emotional autonomy in adolescence.

Several studies found that middle or older adolescents are much less likely than younger adolescents to endorse items suggesting that their parents are perfect (Beyers and Goosens, 1999; Levpušek, 2006). Similarly, Gutman and Eccles (2007) found that older teens are less likely than younger teens to report feelings of respect for parents and desire to be exactly like them. There is a decrease in the closeness felt between parents and youths (Collins and Steinberg, 2006; McGue, Elkins, Walden, and Iacono, 2005; Smetana, Campione-Barr, and Metzger, 2006).

Perkins and Turiel (2007) found that older teens tend to be less accepting of parental directiveness than younger teens particularly regarding personal issues. Adolescents increasingly conceptualize aspects of their day to day lives (e.g., cleaning their rooms, how they dress) as contingent on personal choice and therefore not subject to parental control (Bosma et al., 1996; Smetana, 1988, 1989). Moreover, adolescents become less likely than younger children to state that they always agree with or have the same opinions as their parents (Beyers and Goosens, 1999; Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986; Levpušek, 2006). They become increasingly dissatisfied by the degree to which their parents grant them autonomy (Collins, 1990).
Adolescents not only gain the capacity to evaluate their relationships but they also are better able to “think for themselves” to establish a more consistent view of themselves as existing apart from interactions with caregivers (Selman, 1980). Adolescents increasingly report feeling more autonomous (Greenberger, 1984; Greenberger and Sorenson, 1974), more individuated and less likely to express childish dependency on their parents (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986). In general, emotionally autonomous adolescents experience a sense of confidence in making choices independent of their parents wishes (Noom et al., 2001). In turn, these adolescents are also more likely to report satisfactory perceptions of self (Noom et al., 1999) and display greater self-reliance (Beyers and Goosens, 1999) than the less emotionally autonomous adolescents. Thus, adolescents increasingly define themselves as separate individuals with their own agendas and corresponding thoughts, feelings and actions.

Traditionally, it was believed that adolescents establish a sense of self by detaching themselves from their parents (Freud, 1958). She saw adolescents’ upheaval, with their emotional detachment from their parents as necessary and desirable stage for growth. However, Neoanalytic theorists modified their approach and deemphasized the role of detachment and conflict per se and instead postulated that healthy adolescence involves the process of individuation in which teens gradually come to see themselves as separate from parents (Blos, 1967).

During the 1980s, and 1990s, many developmental researchers challenged the classic psychoanalytic theory of the development of autonomy, proposing that autonomy does not necessitate severing off ties with parental figures (e.g. Allen et al., 1994a, Collins, 1990; Collins and Repinski, 1994; Grotevant and Cooper, 1986; Hill and Holmbeck, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Ryan and Lynch, 1989; Steinberg, 1990; Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986; Youniss and Smollar, 1985). Instead, they proposed that autonomy and connections to others coexist and influence each other.

Although adolescence involves a transition from a dependency relationship with parents to mutually reciprocal relationship with significant others, this shift need not require that adolescents detach themselves from parents (Lamborn and Steinberg, 1993; Ryan et al., 1995). New models emphasize the importance of attachment or
connectedness to parental figures for the development of responsible autonomy in adolescents (Allen et al., 1994; Ryan and Lynch, 1989, Steinberg, 1990; Allen et al., 2003; Sroufe 2005; Collins et al., 2000).

Grotevant (1998) hold that the term ‘transformation’ replaces the term ‘severing’ as a more accurate descriptor of relationship change at this stage of life cycle. The nature and function of parent-adolescent relationship are transformed as the young person gains capacity for independent functioning and desire more responsibility and autonomy (Collins et al., 1997a; Collins et al., 1997b). During adolescence there is a gradual movement away from asymmetry toward a state of asynchrony between the adolescents’ need for autonomy and parents’ willingness to grant it. The new equilibrium obtained is one in which a healthy individuated adolescent (independent, responsible and competent) enjoys warm and close relationship with parents (Eccles et al. 1993).

Steinberg et al. (1994) pointed out that instead of pulling in opposite to their parents, adolescents are forming their autonomy and identity by renegotiating their place in the family, evolving to a more peer-like status with their parents. For this status change to occur, the parents must be open, flexible, willing and able to reason with their child, and seek and abide by at least some of the child’s input. The child, in turn, must have developed the basic social competencies and self-regulation that earns their trust. The end result, Chase-Lansdale et al. (1995) maintain, is “a separate identity, a strong sense of autonomy, nested in peer-like, close emotional bonds”.

Even though attachment relationships with parents may be somewhat transformed by adolescents’ increased autonomous functioning, attachment model appears to be relatively stable. Rosenthal and Kobak (2007) found that 68% of adolescents and 58% of first year college students identified one of their parents as their primary attachment figure. Moreover, the role of attachment relationship with caregivers is considered to be adaptive in adolescence (Gilligan 1982; Grotevant and Cooper, 1985; Josselson, 1988).

Although some studies have shown that self reported attachment security to parents decreases with pubertal maturity (Papini, et al. 1991), recent investigation indicate that only certain components of attachment relationship change while other
remain stable. For example, the degree to which children seek proximity and rely on attachment figure in times of stress decreases but that attachment figure’s perceive availability does not. These findings indicate that the maintenance of physical proximity to parents and need for protection in times of threat or stress is less essential for adolescents due to increased mental and physical capabilities, but trust in the availability of the attachment figure remains important (Bowlby, 1970; Rice and Cummins, 1996).

Ryan and Lynch (1989) pointed out that individuation is not something that happens from parents but rather with them. They argued that secure attachment and emotional connectedness with parents facilitate the transition to increased autonomy. In a trustworthy and satisfying relationship with others, individuals can volitionally turn to others for emotional support (Ryan et al., 2005), they can feel supported to willingly pursue their personal commitments and interests (Soenens and Vansteenkiste, 2005), and they can adhere to social norms and requests because they reflectively value doing so (Ryan, 1993; Vansteenkiste et al., 2005). In each of these cases, individuals experience a sense of connectedness with another person or with the culture at large while simultaneously acting in a volitional (i.e., autonomous) fashion.

Allen et al. (1997) states that the ability of adolescents to successfully balance their need to attain autonomy with their desire to maintain a sense of relatedness may be considered as a stage specific manifestation of attachment security. Among young children, for example, the responsive and sensitive caretaker is believed to contribute to child’s feeling of security, confidence in exploring the environment and the development of instrumental competence (Bowlby, 1988; Kobak and Sceery, 1988). For the late adolescents, secure parental attachments provide a source of comfort and safety during multiple life changes of adolescence by supporting independent strivings and offering guidance when needed (Kenny, 1987; Kenny et al., 1993; Von Der Lippe and Amundsen, 1998).

Similarly, Belsky and Cassidy (1994) reported that secure adolescents use their parents as a base from which to confidently and autonomously explore the world around them, returning to parents for comfort, support and advice when the limits of their competence are reached. A number of studies have reported that parents retain this
attachment function even into adulthood (Fraley and Davis, 1997; Trinke and Bartholomew, 1997; Collins and Laursen, 2004; Markiewicz et al., 2006)

In fact, Bowlby (1980) was the first who suggested that in adolescence it was the combination of autonomy-relatedness that was most linked to optimal outcomes in parent-child relationship (see Murphey et al., 1963). Bowlby and others proposed that there should be a continual balance between stress reducing behaviors that incorporate dependence on the caregivers and exploratory behaviors that function to increase knowledge of and mastery over the environment (Baltes and Silverberg, 1994; Bretherton, 1992).

Sroufe (2005) reported that when caregivers are both emotionally supportive and encouraging of autonomy, children develop the capacity to not only confidently approach and master novel situations and tasks, but also ask for help when needed. A secure parent adolescent-relationship allows both parents and adolescents to acknowledge the teen’s autonomy strivings and to support them while also maintaining the relationship.

Grodnick and Ryan (1989) found that autonomy in adolescents is related to parental autonomy support. They contended that autonomy is facilitated when parents allow children to move toward independence within a secure and supportive relationship. Parental autonomy support is linked to parent’s promotion of adolescents’ independent expression, thinking and decision making (Gray and Steinberg, 1999; Silk et al., 2003; Steinberg and Silk, 2002). Parental autonomy support is truly associated with various adaptive outcomes among adolescents, including academic competence, school achievement, ego development and smoother school transitions (Allen et al., 1994a, Ratelle et al., 2005) and it also negatively predicts maladjustment in adolescents (Grodnic et al., 1991). Similarly, Pan and Gauvain (2012) reported that parental autonomy support was a positive predictor of Chinese students’ academic learning experiences. Whereas, parental undermining of autonomy is linked to youths’ concurrent hostility toward their parents and hostility with peers nearly a decade later (Allen, Hauser, O’Connor, and Bell, 2002).

Steinberg (1990) stated that adolescents with supportive, warm and involved parents and who also provide appropriate structure and demand mature behavior may be
more likely to feel capable of making independent decisions while seeking appropriate input from others, exploring their environments, expressing themselves, and engaging in behavior that reflect their true selves. Numerous studies have confirmed that a close and supportive relationship between adolescents and their parents result in significant increases in adolescent autonomy (Collins et al., 1997a; Cooper et al., 1983; Grotevant and Cooper, 1986; Mazor and Enright, 1988; Ryan and Lynch, 1989; Youniss and Smollar, 1985; Hill and Holmbeck, 1986; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Stewart et al., 2000; Sartor and Youniss, 2002).

Consistent with the above findings, Sartor and Youniss (2002) also established that parental support in not detrimental to the individuation process. Mayseless et al. (1998) argued that emotional distancing from parents is not a prerequisite for developing adolescents’ autonomous functioning. In fact, existing research demonstrates that adolescent’s quest for autonomy and need for connectedness run parallel during adolescence (Grotevant and Cooper, 1986; Noller, 1995; Seigel and Ehrilch, 1989).

Moreover, researchers are increasingly documenting that adolescents, who appear most autonomous and self-reliant report close and affectionate parental relationships (Allen et al., 1994; Ryan and Lynch, 1989). Secure states of mind are also associated with warmer, more accepting, open and engaged interactions with parents (Becker-Stoll et al., 2001; Ducharme et al., 2002; Roisman et al., 2001). Securely attached adolescents often turn to their mothers to fulfill attachment functions, particularly the secure base function (Markiewicz et al. 2006). Numerous studies report that adolescents with secure attachment style perceive their family as more involved and supportive and as granting them more psychological autonomy than insecure teens (Allen et al., 2003; Karavasilis et al., 2003; Harvey and Byrd 2000; Kobak and Sceery, 1988).

Frank, Pirsch and Wright (1990) found that adolescents who were insecure or disengaged from their parents reported lower levels of emotional autonomy from their parents. In contrast, those adolescents who experience greater closeness and less insecurity in relation to their parents reported greater levels of autonomy.
Kobak et al. (1991) studied the process of attaining autonomy while maintaining relatedness in adolescence. Results indicated that adolescents’ insecure/preoccupied attachment models were associated with “maternal dominance” and adolescents’ “dysfunctional anger”. Further, Kobak et al. (1993) found that adolescents with secure attachment representations interacted with their mother in a manner that involved less “dysfunctional anger” and “less avoidance” than adolescents with insecure models of attachment. Similarly, Becker-Stoll and Fremmer-Bombik (1997) found that adolescents with secure attachment representations were more likely to exhibit and promote autonomy and relatedness while interacting with their mothers than their insecure counterparts. Therefore, it can be concluded that adolescent’s secure attachment is related to exhibition of autonomy, whereas insecure attachment results in inhibition of autonomy development.

In addition to autonomy support, secure parental attachments have also been found to provide support and security during other developmental challenges of the adolescent period. Secure parental attachment have been found to buffer life stress and to be associated with positive self-worth and low levels of depressive symptoms (Kenny et al., 1993; Kobak et al., 1991; Papini and Roggman, 1992), easier college adjustment (Larose and Boivin, 1997; Rice et al., 1995), assertiveness in social relationships (Kenny, 1987), enhanced resources for coping with stress (Brack et al., 1993), career exploration and commitment (Blustein et al., 1991) and adaptive social and psychological functioning (Kenny and Barton, 2002).

Scharf et al. (2004) found that during the stressful transition, securely attached adolescents perceived their parents as more sensitively responsive to them than did dismissing individuals. Secure individuals became more competent in dealing with different stressors from early adolescence to young adulthood (Seiffge-Krenke and Beyers, 2005). Whereas, dismissing individuals evince lower levels of intimacy in relations with friends and romantic partners (Scharf et al., 2004), evince substance abuse and conduct disorders (Brown and Wright, 2003), report less preparation for examinations and diminished attention throughout the transition to college (Larose et al., 2005).
Thompson (2006) reported that when parents are warm and sensitive with their children, their children are likely to develop secure attachments. Children with secure attachments tend to develop working models of relationships that are positive and constructive and these models are expected to influence the quality of their relationships and emotion communication in the future (e.g., Kochanska, Aksan, and Carlson, 2005). Warm and supportive parenting has been associated with children’s understanding of others’ emotions (Ontai and Thompson, 2002; Thompson, 2006), as well as with children’s self-regulation (Brody and Ge, 2001; Eisenberg, Gershoff, et al., 2001; Eisenberg et al., 2005), both of which predict children’s emotional and social competence (Eisenberg, Gershoff, et al., 2001; McDowell and Parke, 2005; Parke and Buriel, 2006).

Several studies have demonstrated that good parent-adolescent relationship can hardly be sustained without open and healthy communication between parents and adolescent. Communication among family members is one of the most crucial facets of interpersonal relationships and to understand the dynamics underlying family relations (Collins, 1990; Gecas and Seff, 1990; Noller, 1994; Scabini, 1995; Sroufe, 1991; Youniss and Smollar, 1985; Clark and Shields, 1997). Within the family system, family members constantly define and adjust their relationships through patterns of communication. Ehrlich, Cassidy, and Dykas (2011) suggested that adolescent–parent open communication may facilitate free flow of information between adolescents and parents. Understanding communication patterns makes it possible to better understand cohesion, decision making process and family role expectations (Clark and Shields, 1997).

Allen et al. (1994a) found that parent’s behavior that made it more difficult for family members to discuss their own reasons for preferring one option over others were highly correlated with decreases in adolescents’ ego development and self-esteem between the ages of 14-16. Relationship in which parents are responsive to adolescent’s expressions of discrepant opinions are associated with self-confidence and autonomously chosen values (Bosma and Gerrits, 1985; Quintana and Lapsley, 1987) and also with a sense of identity and mature social perception skills in adolescents (Grotevant and Cooper, 1985; Hauser et al., 1991; Walker and Taylor, 1991b).
Observational studies of parent-adolescent interaction have shown that adolescents from families marked by high encouragement for expressing and developing one’s own point of view manifested higher levels of identity exploration (Grotevant and Cooper, 1985) and ego development (Allen et al., 1994a). A close relationship with parents, where adolescents feel able to talk about themselves without exciting judgment or anger and be accepted, forms a buffer against problems and pressures of adolescence (Bronstein et al. 1993). Matra (1997) suggested that adequate communication between parents and adolescents can effectively mediate the stress that adolescents experience. They will be less likely to feel lonely and suffocated in the external world when they know that they are encouraged, supported and always have somebody to count on at home.

Larson and Richards (1994) stated that parent-adolescent relationship should involve the process of striking a balance between the development of individuality and self-reliance of the adolescent on one hand, and a sense of connection and parental guidance on the other. Moore (1987) reported that adolescents who experience separation from parents as a movement to greater autonomy and self-governance, coupled with continued connection with parents, experience the transition to adulthood more positively than do adolescents who experience separation from parents as emotional detachment.

Cooper, Grotevant and Condon (1983) outline the importance of separation (Individuation) and connectedness in parent-adolescent relationship. Separation refers to psychological sense of distinctiveness from parents. Connectedness is conceptualized as behaviors that demonstrate sensitivity, responsiveness and openness to the views of others.

Evidence suggests that when separation and connectedness coupled, adolescents are likely to be psychologically mature. Their identity development proceeds at a desirable pace (Grotevant and Cooper, 1985), they have a healthy respect for themselves and others (Allen et al., 1994), they are self-reliant and less likely to engage in delinquent activities (Lamborn et al., 1991) and they are able to form mature friendships and intimate relations, confidently pursue a vocation and gain a clear sense of identity (Conger, 1991).
However, when separation and connectedness do not occur together, there may be risks Allen et al., (1994a) and Scharf and Mayseless (2008). Too much separation without connectedness might lead to adolescents’ detachment from parents, declining school activities, and retreat into deviant peer subcultures (Eccles et al.1991, Lamborn and Steinberg, 1993; Ryan and Lynch, 1989; Simmons and Blyth, 1987; Steinberg, 1990). Research indicates that connectedness even in the absence of separation from families is associated with social and academic competence (Lamborn and Steinberg, 1993). Adolescents who are neither separated nor connected seem to be psychologically immature (Allen et al., 1994a; Lamborn and Steinberg, 1993).

Autonomy-connectedness refers to the need and capacity for separation and independence, as well as the need and capacity for intimacy and functioning in intimate relationships (Bekker and Van Assen, 2006), and consists of three components: self-awareness (i.e., the capacity to be aware of one’s own opinions, wishes, and needs, and to express these in social interactions), sensitivity to others (i.e., sensitivity to the opinions, wishes, and needs of other people, empathy, capacity and need for intimacy and separation), and capacity for managing new situations (i.e., the experience of easy feelings in new situations, flexibility, an inclination to exploration, and dependence on familiar structures). In sum, separation establishes an adolescent as a unique person who will have the capacity to move out in the world and make decision, and connectedness ensures that the adolescent will remain close to his or her source of guidance and encouragement. When there is an effective combination of separation and attachment in family then the autonomy of adolescent is healthy.

Youniss and Smollar (1985) reported that the balance between individuality and connectedness may be facilitated by recognition of the reciprocity of the parent-adolescent relationship. Kobak and Cole (1994) portray the development of autonomy as a transaction between the individual and interpersonal environment. Parents and adolescents revise their models of relationship in ways that maintain connection, but also reflect the increasing autonomy and self-reliance (Collins, 1990, 1995). Similarly, Grotevant and Cooper (1986) have stressed that autonomy is not merely an intra psychic phenomenon that implies that the individuals free themselves from the social
environment. Instead, growth toward autonomy would involve a reciprocal interaction between higher levels of connectedness with parents and higher levels of personal individuation. Adolescents’ individuality within a context of affective support and communication provides an optional environment for the development of social skills, identity and psychological well-being (Connel and Wellborn, 1990; Baltes and Silverberg, 1994; Noller, 1994; Ryan, 1995; Silverberg and Gondoli, 1996).

Thus, adolescents can develop their independence without needing to cut off with their parents. It is thus a paradoxical process that involves the establishment of an autonomous ego functioning and at the same time, the maintaining of nurturing family relationships.

Steinberg (1990) maintained that adolescence is a period of increasing strivings for autonomy and normal development requires that an adolescent be accorded sufficient space to assert an independent sense of identity while maintaining connection to parents. In a study, Craig and Baucum (2002) reported that when parents are supportive and provide encouragement for adolescents to express themselves, many of their psychological needs for autonomy and competence are met. On the other hand, they suggested that when adolescents have little or no opportunities to try things on their own or when they meet constant disapproval from parents during their attempts to develop autonomy they become passive in their interaction with people and environment.

Lamborn and Steinberg (1993) hold that emotional autonomy stemming from weak parent-adolescent relationship results in negative implications on adolescents psychosocial development. Garber and Little (2001) concluded that high emotional autonomy combined with minimal parental support promotes emotional distress in adolescents. According to Steinberg and Silverberg (1986), growing feelings of insecurity stemming from perceived parental rejection push adolescents towards seeking conformity with extra familial resources. Early autonomy from parents destabilizes adolescents’ quest for individuality and makes them dangerously prone to peer pressure. Noom et al. (1999) indicated that higher level of emotional autonomy in combination with poor relationship with father and a good relationship with peers foster behavioral problems in adolescents. Lamborn and Steinberg (1993) found that adolescents who display high
emotional autonomy may also be more likely to engage in delinquent activities. Garber and Little (2001) found that emotionally detached adolescents in absence of parental support results in negative outcomes of emotional autonomy.

Eccles et al. (1993) proposed that negative consequences will ensue if parents are not able to adjust their parenting to accommodate adolescents need for more autonomy. Parent-child relationship prior to adolescence is characteristically asymmetrical with respect to the control dimension. It is along this dimension that most of the alterations in parenting are likely to occur (Kidwell et al., 1983). Quintana and Lapsley (1987) stated that subjects who perceived their parents as controlling reported weak attachment and adolescents’ identity achievement was inhibited by perception of higher parental control. Baumrind (1971) have argued that relatively high levels of adult control when exercised in an emotionally supportive relationship have most positive consequences for child development than lower levels of adult control exercised in the same type of supportive environment.

The findings from the research on parental authority suggest that parents need to balance appropriate control over and regulation of their adolescents’ behavior with developmentally appropriate attempts to grant them more autonomy over personal issues particularly as they get older. Hodgins et al., (2010) hold that an autonomous motivation, relative to a controlled motivation, enhances the resilience of individuals in threatening situations. An autonomous motivation facilitates emotional expression, which in turn promotes emotional regulation and wellbeing (Weinstein and Hodgins, 2009). However, adolescents who feel that they have little opportunity to participate meaningfully in family decision making, have more conflicts with their families over issues related to autonomy and control (Feldman and Rosenthal, 1991). High levels of parent-child conflict and negativity often have been linked to negative outcomes for youths (Kim et al., 2001; Ramos et al., 2005; Steinberg and Silk, 2002).

Although many families experience a modest upswing of conflict at the outset of adolescence (Collins and Laursen, 2004; Collins and Steinberg, 2006; Hill et al. 1985b, Papini et al.1988; Papini and Sebby 1987; Steinberg 1987, Collins 1990, 1995), disagreements typically are not a threat to relationship in these families. Indeed, conflict
during this period actually may strengthen relationships by providing a vehicle for communication about interpersonal issues that require attention. More than any other form of social interaction, disagreement offers parents and adolescents an opportunity to reconsider and revise expectations and renegotiate roles and responsibilities to be consistent with autonomy typically accorded to youth development (Collins, 1995; Laursen and Collins, 1994). In fact, it has been argued that moderate levels of parent–adolescent conflict that occur within a relationship characterized by harmony and cohesion may be associated with better adjustment than either no conflict or frequent conflict (Adams and Laursen, 2001; Smetana et al., 2006).

Moreover, studies report that level of conflict also depends on qualities of connectedness in the relationship (Grotevant and Cooper, 1986; Laursen and Collins, 1994). Positive connectedness promotes constructive resolution that fosters growth and insight; in less supportive relationships conflict is considered a hostile attack that may have negative implications (Hauser et al., 1991).

Paikoff and Brooks-Gunn (1991) found that less than 10% of families with adolescent children have relationships where there are ongoing and worsening conflicts and arguments. Similarly, Collins and Laursen (2004) and Smetana et al. (2006) found that only approximately 5–15% of youths experience extremely conflictual relationship with their parents. Most young people feel appreciated by their parents, seek their advice, respect them and are concerned about them (Hill, 1985; Youniss and Ketterlinus, 1987). Moreover with increasing age, adolescents generally become more involved in joint decision-making with their parents (Romich et al. 2009), and the number of conflicts decrease.

Goossens (2006) reported that in early adolescence, one of the first ways in which parents grant autonomy is through more independence in decision-making over aspects of youths’ daily lives, such as their appearance or how they spend their free time. Similarly, Wray-Lake et al. (2010) hold that child’s autonomy-seeking is most prominently reflected in decision-making processes. Further, the age in which parents begin to grant decisional autonomy as well as how much support parents give to help youth make good decisions has been linked to youths’ academic success (Ceballo 2004) and positive well
being (Bush et al. 2004). Furthermore, Holmbeck and O’Donnell (1991) noted that adolescents who were involved in decision making in their family displayed increased self-esteem, whereas the adolescents whose parents were unwilling to grant them the opportunity for autonomous decision making experience decreased self-esteem over time. As adolescents get older and parents increasingly transition more control over to their children, parents may report more joint and youth-unilateral decision-making in a larger variety of domains (Wray-Lake et al. 2010).

Collins and Russell (1991) suggest that continuities in relationship coexist, however with significant changes in the amount, content and perceived meanings of interactions, in expression of positive and negative affect between parents and adolescents, and in their perceptions of each other and their relationship. Hartup and Laursen (1991) hold that closeness during adolescence is manifested in forms that differ form closeness in earlier parent-child relationships. For example, intimacy as expressed by cuddling and extensive joint interactions decreases as children mature, whereas conversations in which information conveyed and feelings are expressed increases. These adaptations are appropriate responses to the maturity level and changing needs of the adolescents. Steinberg (2001), Steinberg and Silk (2002) found that relationship with parents remain the most influential of all adolescent relationships and shape most of the important decisions confronting children, even as parent’s authority over mundane details (e.g. attire, hairstyle) wanes.

In nutshell, the kind of family environment prevalent significantly determines the development of autonomy in adolescents. The family environment can be captured through the styles of parenting adopted by parents to rear their children. Different parenting styles engender differentially effective skills for autonomous and responsible behavior.

The literature on various socialization practices and their effects provide consistent evidence that parental warmth, inductive discipline, bidirectional communication, appropriate autonomy granting, non punitive punishment practices and consistency in child rearing are associated with positive developmental outcomes in children (Maccoby and Martin, 1983; Baumrind, 1971, 1991). This constellation of
practices has come to be known as “authoritative parenting”. Authoritative parents demonstrate high warmth and high control towards their children. Kochanska et al., (1989) found that authoritative pattern is mainly consisted of the factors of expression of affection, rational guidance and encouragement of independence.

Empirical studies on the relationship between parenting and adolescent development have primarily confirmed the importance of support and stimulation for facilitating the achievement of independence and becoming an autonomous individual during adolescence (Fletcher et al. 1995; Fuhrman and Holmbeck, 1995; Gecas and Seff, 1990) These studies found a significant relation between adolescents autonomy and authoritative parenting styles in which parents were highly responsive and demanding (Maccoby and Martin, 1983).

Sartor and Youniss (2002) proposed that authoritative parents extend the “secure base” concept from infant attachment, giving adolescents a similar secure base from which to safely explore and learn. Silk et al. (2003) and Hill (1987) have noted that psychological autonomy granting while an important feature of authoritative parenting at all stages of development assumes even greater importance during adolescence. Authoritative parents give priority to the child’s need and abilities while at the same time implying age-appropriate maturity demands (Baumrind, 1991a; Darling and Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby, 1992). Moreover, authoritative parents are responsive to the demands of their offsprings, but at the same time, expect their children to be responsive to their demands (Baumrind, 1978; Darling and Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby and Martin, 1983). Such parents encourage verbal give and take, enforce rules when necessary, have clear expectations for mature behavior and encourage independence. They foster psychological autonomy by encouraging their children to express their own opinions (Steinberg, 1990). Moreover, adolescents are more likely to disclose if parents adopt an authoritative parenting style (Bednar and Fisher, 2003; Darling, et al. 2006), if they have a trusting relationship with parents (Daddis and Randolph, 2010; Smetana, et al. 2006), and if they believe parents have the authority to set rules about peer interactions (Laird and Marrero, 2010; Smetana et al., 2006). Tilton-Weaver et al. (2010) found that parental coldness, rejection, and negative responses to adolescent disclosure tended to
erode feelings of connection to parents, which affected youths’ subsequent level of disclosure.

Furthermore, Steinberg (2001) reported that adolescents of authoritative parents achieve more in school, report less depression and anxiety; they are less likely to engage in antisocial behavior and tend to score higher on measure of self-reliance. Overall, Lamborn et al. (1991) hold that authoritatively raised children are better adjusted and more competent, they are confident about their abilities, competent in areas of achievement and less likely to get into trouble. Parents who are flexible may respond adaptively to developmental change (Holmbeck and Hill, 1991) and thus are more likely to facilitate development in their offsprings (Kidwell et al., 1983). On the other hand, parents who discourage exploration and growth, preferring to maintain familial status quo, are likely to have children who fail to achieve a mature developmental status (Hauser et al., 1991). This kind of parenting has come to be known as “authoritarian style”. Authoritarian parents show low warmth and high control to their children.

Kochanska et al. (1989) found that authoritarian pattern consisted of the factors of authoritarian control, supervision of the child and control by anxiety induction. Numerous studies have confirmed that authoritarian parents neglect the child’s need in favor of parent’s agenda, strong demands for child’s compliance and forceful methods for gaining compliance and punishing infractions (Baumrind, 1991; Maccoby 1992; Darling and Steinberg, 1993).

Miller et al., (2001) hold that extreme and rigid control is not only coercive but is also at odd with some of the positive effects of warmth and affection such as trust, flexibility, shared optimism and autonomy. Steinberg et al., (1994) suggested that moderate control, combined with warmth, allows for incremental and appropriate granting of autonomy to adolescents, so that they can become more competent. The benefits of control erode if the level of control is too high (Miller et al., 2001).

Psychological control has been linked to variety of maladjustment outcomes, including depression (Barber et al., 1994), lower self-esteem (Soeness et al., 2006), lower self-worth (Bean and Northup, 2009 and Plunkett et al., 2007), lower academic performance (Bean et al., 2003), externalizing problem behaviors in children and
adolescents (e.g., Barber, 1996; Brody et al., 2001; Joussemet et al., 2008; Scaramella et al., 2008) and also hinder identity development during adolescence (Luyckx et al., 2007). Furthermore, psychological control is negatively related to peer support (Karavasilis, Doyle, and Markiewicz, 2003), and is positively related to general social anxiety (Loukas, Paulos, and Robinson, 2005), unease and withdrawal in therapeutic relationships (Soucy and Larose, 2004), and aggressive behaviors towards peers (Nelson and Crick, 2002).

Patterson and Stouthamer-Loeber (1984) stated that authoritarian parenting has especially adverse effects in the realm of psychological development because it restricts the child’s sense of competence and independence. However, authoritarianism may not have negative effect in the realm of drug use, because parental control may act as a determent to deviance. Similarly, Lamborn et al. (1991) stated that adolescents who describe their parents as authoritarian score well on measures of obedience and conformity to the standards of adults; they do well in school and they are less likely than their peers to be involved in deviant activities but at the same time, these adolescents appeared to have paid a price when self-confidence is concerned—both in terms of self-reliance and in terms of their perception of their own social and academic abilities.

In contrast, permissive parents exhibit high warmth and low control while rearing their children. Permissively raised adolescents enjoy benefits in the realm of psychological development but evidence higher rates of deviance. They are self-confident and self-reliant, at the same time, they are more peer oriented and relatively disengaged from school. They show higher frequency of involvement in certain deviant behaviors, including drug and alcohol use and school misconduct (Lamborn et al., 1991).

The parenting characterized as neglectful is both low in warmth and control. It consists of relatively few expectations, low involvement with the child and a rejecting, unresponsive parent-centered attitude. It is associated with relatively higher levels of antisocial delinquency and drug use and with lower levels of personal maturity and achievements (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994). Baumrind (1991) proposed that authoritative parents exemplify socially responsible and caring behavior. Whereas, neglectful patterns model self-absorption and low responsibility for the welfare of others.
Similarly, a number of researchers reported that the diffuse-avoidant style is associated with negative aspects of psychosocial adjustment and lower well-being (Phillips and Pittman 2007; Seaton and Beaumont 2008; Vleioras and Bosma 2005).

Maccoby and Martin (1983) identified the defining interactions of authoritativeness as those that are high in reciprocity and bidirectional communication, whereas authoritarian and permissive style imply relationships in which desirable levels of reciprocity and communication are disrupted by the dominance of parent (in the authoritarian style) and of child (in the indulgent style).

Steinberg (1990) concluded that when one or more components of authoritative parenting are missing, adverse outcomes occur. Adolescents from authoritarian homes score high on measures of obedience but low on measures of self-competence. Adolescents from a permissive parenting background are self-confident but evidence higher levels of substance use and school difficulties. Finally, adolescents from neglectful homes evidence the lowest scores on competence and higher scores on behavioral problems. Adolescents from authoritative parenting background have higher levels of self-esteem, moral development, impulse control and subjective feelings of independence than are children from other types of parenting environments. These findings were also confirmed by Avenevoli et al. (1999).

In sum, responsiveness appears to facilitate the development of self-esteem and social skills; demandingness appears to foster impulse control and social responsibility. Either too restrictive or too permissive pattern of parental demands seems to interfere with adolescent’s ability to differentiate their value system from the values held by parents.

Yet despite some impressive consistencies in the literature of parenting styles, there exist some discrepancies related to cross cultural studies and some important questions remain unanswered. Researchers have found that the same parenting style may differently affect adolescents’ development depending on the social milieu in which family is embedded. Baumrind (1972), for example, reported that authoritative parenting is associated with fearful timid behavior and behavioral compliance among European-
American children; is associated with assertiveness among African-American girls. Furthermore, studies in which the effects of authoritativeness have been consistently shown that authoritative parenting is most strongly associated with academic achievement among European-American adolescents; is least effective in influencing the academic achievement of Asian and African-American youths (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Steinberg, 1990).

There are differences in Indian and European-American cultures. In Indian culture, each person occupies a position within the family and community, i.e. within a system of interpersonal and intergroup relations and is not expected to behave in a totally individuated way (Chung, 1992). The relationship between parents and child is vertical, with power and status determined hierarchically (Fong, 1992; Ross and Sheriff, 1992). The child is expected to maintain family traditions and fulfill family obligations.

Poole et al. (1982) conducted a study on Indian, American and Australian adolescents concerning their perceptions of their own autonomy and the control by family members. American subjects indicated the greatest amount of autonomy and the most influenced in family decision making, and Indian subjects the least. Australian females saw their mothers as less controlling than did their Indian and American counterparts. The influence of father outside the family was greatest in India.

According to Roland (1978), in contrast to Western emphasis on individuation and personal autonomy, Indian culture stresses the symbiotic modes of relating. He perceives the Indian indulgence of childhood symbiotic strivings and abrupt curtailment of assertiveness during the period when separation-individuation is normally accomplished in the West, as contributing to the symbiotic emphasis in Indian culture.

Even Neki (1976) has suggested that Western child rearing practices encourage individuation and the Indian child rearing fosters dependency. This is because of uninterrupted close physical contact which the child receives from the mother. The prolonged and the indulgent contact between the child and the mother prevalent in Indian family have shown to nurture more and more dependency in children. According to him,
dependency does not have negative connotation attached as it is seen in the Western culture.

Cormack (1961) suggested that self in the Indian society has little meaning except in relation to family and in serving the family. Empirical research has confirmed these observations (Ghei, 1962; Gordon and Kakar, 1966; Kakar and Gordon, 1966; Mukherjee, 1967). American culture has been described as self oriented as opposed to the social orientation of Indians (Nobuo, 1965) and as valuing autonomy more than Indians (Mukherjee, 1967; Singh et al., 1962).

Ramu (1988) hold that cohesiveness and family connectedness are often continued into adulthood. Parents choose careers and even spouses for their children. Separation interrupts the developing security (Mohapatra, 1987). In Indian families, females are expected to maintain a subordinate role and not assume decision making power (Kakar, 1982). While American culture encourages development of personal identity and social independence, such behaviors, if practiced by Asian Indian adolescents within the family context, may generate intergeneration and between gender conflict (Jain, 1990).

Shukla (1994) proposed that parents in India continue to be the primary socializers of their children. Symbiotic relation shared by Asian Indian adolescents and their parents (Carson et al., 1999) lasts longer than in other cultures (Simhadri, 1989; Shukla, 1994). However, Biswas (1992) suggested that the traditional, affectional, religious and economic bonds that create family cohesion are weakening. Nucleation has depleted the emotional surroundings of the individuals. Indian adolescents are gradually moving to achieve autonomy and reducing dependency on parents.

In a cross cultural study, Graf (2003) concluded that in comparison to U.S. American males and females, Asian Indian adolescents scored higher on all measures of autonomy. This contradicts the often assumed view that the Indian society promotes conformity instead of individuality in adolescents (Reddy and Gibbons, 1999).

According to self-determination theory, (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2000, 2008) experiencing a sense of autonomy and choicefullness in one’s actions is critical for
people’s optimal functioning and this is true across different cultures. Autonomy within self-determination theory concerns a sense of volition or willingness when engaging in a task (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Ryan, and Deci, 2008). Several studies in various life domains reveal the diverse positive consequences associated with acting in a self determined fashion (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Valerland, 1997). For instance, in the educational domain, autonomous self-regulation is associated with higher feelings of self perceived (Fortier et al., 1995) and teacher rated (Grolnick et al., 1991) academic competence, with use of optimal learning strategies (Yamauchi et al. 1999), with less defensive coping styles (Ryan and Connell, 1989), with higher school grades (Black and Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste et al. 2004b) and show better learning dispositions throughout the college transition (Larose et al., 2005).

Overall, review of literature suggests that there occur changes in the ways that teens think about their parents and about themselves in relation to their parents. These transformations in adolescents ways of thinking and feeling set the stage for autonomous adult functioning, in which close ties can be maintained with parents without day to day dependence that characterize earlier stages of development. However, it should be noted that despite the changes in conceptions of parents that occur during adolescence, such transformations rarely involves a complete rejection of relationship with parents. In contrast, research continues to suggest that overall, adolescents maintain the views of their parents, respect their opinions and agree with their general values. Moreover, new models of parent-adolescent relationship acknowledge the adolescents need to individuate and establish a sense of emotional autonomy but view this process as healthiest when it occurs in the context of an emotionally close parent-adolescent relationship.

2.2 EMOTIONAL AUTONOMY AND PEER RELATIONSHIP

Peers acts as one of the most important extra familial influence on the development of adolescents emotional autonomy. To gain greater autonomy, adolescents begin to orient themselves towards their peers. Greater significance is given to peers as companions, as providers of advice, support and feedback, as models of behavior and as sources of comparative information concerning personal qualities and skills.
The importance of friendship increases as young people move into and through adolescence (Scholte et al. 2001; Helsen et al. 2000; Newcomb and Bagwell, 1995). Hartrup (1993) hold that peers act as one of the most salient forces of adolescents’ lives. Getting on well with people of the same age becomes more important in adolescence than it was in childhood (Durkin, 1995; Jaffe 1998; Shaffer, 1999). As children enter adolescence they begin to spend less time with their families (Larson et al., 1996, Collins and Repinski, 1994; Furman and Buhrmester, 1992, Laursen and Williams, 1997; Clark-Lempers et al., 1991; Larson and Richards, 1991). This leads to increased opportunities for recreational activities, academic and social activities outside the family settings. As adolescents interact less with their parents, peer relationships take on greater importance in adolescents’ lives (Berndt, 1989; Buhrmester, 1996; Savin-Williams and Berndt, 1990). Nickerson and Nagle (2005) argued that adolescents move towards their peers in order to seek autonomy from their parents.

Peers often compete with and sometimes overpower parents or school in their influence over teenagers’ attitude and behavior (Collins and Steinberg, 2006; Coleman, 1961; Kandel and Andrews, 1987). Relationship with parents and peers provide contrasting contexts for the multiple skills involved in autonomy and self-regulation. Structurally, the closed-field represented by family relationship provides interdependence and presents barrier to autonomy, whereas converse is true for the open-field relationship with peers. The open-field of peer relationship tends to provide opportunities for construction, negotiation and working toward a consensus which facilitates the development of emotional autonomy in adolescents.

Although parents typically remain very important influence in adolescents’ lives (Blum and Rinehart, 2000; Collins et al. 2000), peers begin to take on roles that previously fell almost entirely within the parents’ domain. Peers act as emotional confidants (Gottman and Mettetal, 1986), provide each other with advice (Buhrmester, 1996) and serve as an influential models for behavior and attitude (Sussman et al., 1994). However, relationship with parents remain important at times of transition and in future domains such as education and career, peers have greater influence regarding current events, fashion and leisure-time activities (Hendry et al. 1993). Similarly, Steinberg and
Morris (2001) hold that while youth turn to their peers for more superficial decisions (e.g. clothes, beliefs about curfews), parents are more influential than peers in more serious matters of religious beliefs, moral values and political ideas. Shaffer (1999) maintained that within peer relationship a great deal of learning takes place about what types of behavior are effective in relationships. Learning to move beyond family and develop interdependent (rather then dependent) relationships prepares young people for autonomy and later relationship with other adults.

There is some debate over whether most adolescents distance themselves from their parents at the same time as they draw closer to their friends or whether only some young people do this as a result of poor relationship with parents (Durkin, 1995).

The weight of evidence suggests that young people who have fairly close relationship with their parents that are flexible enough to allow for their increasing independence do not replace their parents with their friends. Rather they develop closer relationship with friends while maintaining good relationship with their parents. On the other hand, those who feel distant from their parents or whose parents respond to their increasing maturity by placing more restrictions on them tend to seek closeness with their friends instead (Ary et al., 1999; Durkin, 1995; Fuligni and Eccles, 1993; Berk, 2001).

Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) found that adolescents are less influenced by friends when they have close and involving relationship with parents. Adolescents are more influenced by friends when their parents are neglecting or rejecting (Dishion, 1990). Similarly, Collins et al. (2000) and Helsen et al. (2000) reported that when families are functioning well, parents generally have more influence on adolescents than peers and when families encounter problems, peer may become more influential. Freeman and Brown (2001) found that secure adolescents favored mothers over best friends, romantic partners, and fathers as attachment figures, whereas insecure adolescents indicated a strong preference for boyfriend or girlfriend as their primary target for attachment. A number of studies have reported that nurturing and supportive parenting strategies foster a sense of security in peer groups, whereas intrusive and autonomy inhibiting parenting strategies would inhibit group belongingness and social competence (Grolnick, 2003; Karavasilis, Doyle, and Markiewicz, 2003; Nelson and Crick, 2002; Soenens,
Vansteenkiste, Duriez, and Goossens, 2006). However, Harris (1998) suggested that adolescents are more influenced by their friends than anyone else, including their parents.

Allen et al. (2012) suggest that peer influence regarding adolescent substance use is maximized in social contexts in which adolescents approach autonomy issues from a relatively weak family base (lacking autonomy with their mothers and feeling less supported by their mothers) possess weak social skills in handling peer deviance and are confronted with a peer who is well liked within the broader peer group. Similarly, Fuligni and Eccles (1993) found that adolescents sought more advice from their friends and showed extreme closeness to them when their parents did not relax rules and restrictions so that the adolescents could make more of their own decisions. Whereas, Nada Raja and Stanton, (1992) found that adolescents with good attachment to parents showed the best level of well-being. Where adolescents did not have good level of attachment to their parents, closeness to friends did not seem to compensate in terms of their mental health. Laible et al. (2000) found the highest level of adjustment for adolescents when they were closely attached to both family and friends and the worst adjustment when they were low in attachment to both.

Nevertheless, Dunphy (1972) suggested that families or kinship groups (where the adolescents have little or no choice) can not provide the adolescents with adequate skills and roles they need to function effectively in the wider social settings. He held that participating in youth groups was necessary in becoming self-regulating and for constructing an adult identity. In this way, adolescents become embedded in a complex network of relationships which from a continuum involving best friends, close friends, acquaintances, peer groups and romantic relationships. These groups all allow the young person a certain degree of choice in deciding whether or not to join.

Similarly, Hazan and Shaver (1994) state that children must create bonds with other available figures, and as development progresses, peers become extremely important attachment figures. These new peer relationships, however look different than those with parents (Freeman and Brown 2001; Nickerson and Nagle, 2005). According to Hartup (1989) peer relationships fill important emotional needs, because they allow adolescents to interact in “horizontal” ways amongst relatively equals, in contrast to their
more “vertical” relationships with adults. Youniss and Smollar (1985) hold that peer relationships are more symmetrical, involve reciprocity and are evolutionary through adolescence.

During adolescence, young people are expected to expand their relationship network (Collins et al., 1997) and further develop their capacity for mature intimacy with peers, as these relationships become more central in their affective world (Allen and Land, 1999). Intimate relationships evince trust, self-disclosure and concern (Collins and Sroufe, 1999; Orlofsky, 1993). Mature intimacy also involves the capacity for autonomy, individuality and separateness within the relationship (Shulman et al., 1997). Pan and Gauvain (2012) found that peer acceptance and intimacy are critical for the development of autonomous learning motivation among college students.

At adolescence, relationship with peers assume more central importance and are likely to become more intimate and be based on sharing of thoughts, ideas and opinions, as well as activities (Berndt and Perry, 1990; Savin-Williams and Berndt, 1990). Studies reported that both boys and girls may be more likely to share initial experiences of pubertal maturation with friends rather than with parents (Brooks-Gunn et al. 1986; Gaddis and Brooks-Gunn 1985); this selective sharing may in turn lead to increase in emotional distance between parents and children during the pubertal period and thus facilitate the development of emotional autonomy. Adolescent friendships can offer safe settings for exploration of identity and intimacy issues, often through gossip and sharing secrets (Gottman and Parker, 1986). Selman and Schultz (1990) noted that friendships in adolescence allow more of autonomy than in childhood. Attachment theory posits the experiences in close relationships, particularly with caregivers during childhood and the attachment representations thereby formed affect the capacity to form intimate relationships with others. Bretherton and Munholland (1999) hold that these internal representations guide the interpretation and planning of interpersonal transaction with significant others and affects the formation and quality of new relationship.

Gavin and Furman (1996) hold that ability to maintain connections with parents but also appropriately separate from them should allow secure teens to move freely beyond parent-adolescent relationship in order to establish successful new relationship
with significant others. Furman et al. (2002) and Furman (2001) proposed that secure working models manifest its capacity in forming and maintaining close and trusting relationships with friends and romantic partners. During adolescence, when intimacy demands in relationship with peers increases, security of attachment is associated with the abilities necessary to manage such intimacy successfully, such as ability to seek and give care, to feel comfortable with an autonomous sense of self and to negotiate disagreements (Belsky and Cassidy, 1994; Cassidy et al., 1996; Cassidy, 2001; Scharf, 2001).

Weimer et al. (2004) found that secure attachment style was associated with smoother interactions between same sex adolescent friends that promoted a sense of connection. It is also associated with greater relationship satisfaction, greater use of prosocial maintenance strategies and prosocial conflict resolution styles as reported by close friends (Bippus and Rollin, 2003). Furthermore, Adolescents autonomous attachment representations are related to more positive dyadic interaction with the romantic partner (Bouthillier et al., 2002; Cohen et al., 1992; Crowell et al., 2002; Roisman et al., 2001). An autonomous state of mind is associated with exhibiting less disruptive behaviors toward a friend (Zimmermann, 2004; Zimmermann et al., 2001).

Secure teens are also better able to rely on peers to fulfill attachment functions, including wanting to be near their friends (proximity seeking) and being able to turn to them for comfort and support (safe heaven) (Fraley and Davis, 1997; Mayseless, 2004; Nickerson and Nagle, 2005). Furman and Buhrmester (1992) looked at important changes in peer relationship across the transition from childhood to adolescence. More importantly, they found that support seeking needs are fulfilled less by parents and more by peers as childhood ends and adolescence begins.

Youniss and Smollar (1985) stated that the change in utilization of peers might occur because having high quality friendships serves to fulfill the social needs that emerge in adolescence. Kerns (1994) proposed that forming of closer peer bonds allow adolescents to explore independence from parents. This does not undermine the importance of the parent-adolescent relationship, but points toward a gain in importance and influence of peer relationship for positive development.
Related to this, parental understanding and flexibility are associated with adolescents’ friendship satisfaction and general well-being (Sillars et al. 2005). As adolescents experience close bonds with peers, it is imperative to look at peer-adolescent relationship in conjunction to those with parents. Allen et al. (2012) reports that teens who are secure in their ability to turn to their mothers under stress are less likely to end up feeling overly dependent upon their close friends and thus less likely to be influenced by their friend’s behaviour. A number of studies have reported that security of attachment with regard to parental relationship is also associated with having secure working models of friendships, as well as a greater capacity for both closeness and separateness in relationship with friends (Furman et al., 2002; Markiewicz et al., 2001; Mayseless and Scharf, 2007; Scharf et al., 2004). However, Furman et al. (2002) also found significant differences in the attachment security status of adolescents to their parents and peers. Adolescents who were classified as dismissing with their parents were classified as secure with their peers. It is because adolescents may feel that their parents were not responsive at the times of need, and therefore seek this comfort from friends.

In sum, adolescents are likely to choose friendships based on their own relationship history; however, their friends are likely to be relatively similar to their parents on dimensions of values and attitudes (Brown, 1990).

Several studies have demonstrated that the peer relationship of adolescence require equality in give and take, work toward the development of a sense of connection to others and have significance for future interpersonal relationships (Savin-Williams and Berndt, 1990; Wilks, 1986; Allen et al., 1998). These friendship processes which lead to separation and individuation are related to attachment constructs in that a secure attachment allows the adolescents to explore as well as to develop and maintain a separate sense of self. Furthermore, Weimer et al. (2004) found a relation between positive friendship qualities in a best-friend dyad and security of each partner in the dyad, suggesting that those dyads with more security are made up of friends who feel better about not only the friendship but themselves as well. Better communication between dyad partners was also related to more security in the dyad, supporting the importance of communication for attachment.
Furman and Buhrmester (1992) proposed that adolescents’ friendship become closer, more intimate, more disclosing and more supportive with age. Close friendship provide adolescents with developmentally salient opportunities to improve their social skills and social competence (Collins and Steinberg, 2005; Savin-Williams and Berndt, 1990). Hartup (1996) suggested that the nature of close friendships amongst young people makes them potentially ideal places to learn cognitive skills such as communication, problem solving and creativity.

Savin-Williams and Berndt (1990) noted that both positive qualities of peer relationships, such as trust and support, and negative qualities, such as jealousy and resentment, help with development in social and personal realms. Many researchers have studied correlates of positive friendship and have found relations to self-esteem (Greenberg et al. 1983) and lower levels of loneliness (Savin-Williams and Berndt, 1990). Brown and Klute (2003) viewed that research on the quality of adolescent friendship has progressed considerably in recent years. Much research has focused on changes in the positive qualities of friendship over the course of adolescence.

However, Keating (1990) suggested that, during adolescence, young people get more concerned with the views that other people hold of them, particularly their peers and romantic partners. Adolescents are strongly motivated to gain acceptance from others and may attempt to do so by presenting themselves ‘falsely’ i.e. as possessing attributes or beliefs that are not their own but are designed to impress others or conceal attributes they feel are not acceptable by others (Harter et al. 1996).

Allen et al. (1995) proposed that as adolescents search for identities separate from those of their parents, they experiment with new identities by participating in the different behaviors of their peers, because they are unsure of their own identities, peer acceptance is important to many adolescents. Adolescents are often willing to conform to their peer’s behavior in order to be accepted (Newman and Newman, 1976). Durkin (1995) found that conformity to pressure from other young people to behave well seems to peak around 11 to 12 years, whereas conformity to pressure to behave badly peaks around 14 to 15 years. A number of studies have reported that due to the growing need for autonomy, during early and middle adolescence, there is an increase in adolescents’ susceptibility to
peer influence, particularly in the area of antisocial peer influence (Berndt, 1979; Brown, 1990; Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986; Hawkins et al., 1992).

Adolescents who report that they are more susceptible to peer pressure report higher levels of involvement in antisocial activities (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986) and general maladjustment (Vitaro, Brendgen, and Wanner, 2005). Peer influence has been found to be a strong predictor of adolescents substance use (Hawkins et al., 1992; Kandel and Andrews 1987; Flannery et al., 1994; Dielman, 1994; Thomas and Hsiu, 1993), premarital sexual activates (Billy and Udry, 1985a), delinquency (Magnusson et al., 1986) and cigarette smoking (Newman, 1984). However, research also indicates that peer influence can be positive as well. Peers have been shown to help improve academic achievements, (Epstein, 1983; Mounts and Steinberg, 1995), reduce the impact of divorce (Amato, 2000), possible decrease emotional problems such as depression, suicidal thinking and suicide attempts (Garneski and Diekstra, 1996), enhance cognitive skills such as communication, problem solving and creativity (Hartup, 1996), and encourage prosocial behavior (Tesson et al. 1987) and protect against various problem behaviors (Lansford et al., 2003)

Learning to think for themselves in the face of “peer pressure” appears to prepare adolescents for autonomous adult functioning. Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) maintained that as adolescents become less emotionally dependent on their parents and better at saying ‘no’ to them, they seem to decrease in their ability to say ‘no’ to their peers. They hold that development of emotional autonomy is characterized by a trading of emotional dependence on parents for a temporary dependence on peers. They proposed that this conformity to peers actually provides the necessary security to allow young people to develop independence from their parents. Furthermore, they concluded that adolescents move through a transitional period in the progression to true self-reliance. Initially young adolescents gain a sense of emotional autonomy from parents that leave them susceptible to peer pressure. It is only after this transitional period, in which adolescents are easily influenced by peers who substitute for the missing support from parents, do adolescents stand more solidly on their own opinions and decisions. This
leads to the development of true emotional autonomy - without undue reliance on either parents or peers.

Berk (2001) and Durkin (1995) found that conformity to peer pressure tends to decrease as adolescents move towards early adulthood and they become more able to stand up for what they want and believe and to admire others who do not ‘act like sheep’. The need for conformity to peers in dress, activities, likes and dislikes that is experienced so strongly by younger adolescents (Feldman and Elliot, 1990), decreases with age and is best viewed as an indication of their fragile sense of autonomy and need for tangible evidence of similarity, acceptance and belongingness.

In sum, research evidence indicate that peer groups are important in adolescence for young people to acquire and learn the interpersonal skills that are valuable for living in complex ever changing societies. These skills are also valuable so that adolescents can socially navigate the relationships they develop in the process of growing up, from childhood to adulthood. Maintaining closeness with their parents while developing closeness with friends and learning to think and feel for themselves under pressure to conform prepare the adolescents for successful entry into adult life.

2.3 EMOTIONAL AUTONOMY AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

The above literature review suggests that establishing emotional autonomy from parents and peers play a critical role in the development of adolescents. The emerging evidences proposed that problems in handling autonomy negotiations with significant others can have implications for the psychosocial adjustment of the adolescents. The adolescent period is marked by the experience of intense emotions, accompanied with greater individual differences in autonomy-connectedness, and is therefore a sensitive period for maladjustment (Zimmermann, Mohr, and Spangler, 2009). Moreover, adolescents act more intense than younger children or adults (Steinberg, 2008).

Silverberg and Steinberg (1987) argued that adjustment to adulthood depends on how successful the adolescent is in achieving separation and connectedness to parents. Blos (1979) hold that on one hand, gaining emotional autonomy from parents lead to greater self-reliance and self-governance, but on the other hand, this experience also
involves a kind of loss and therefore results in distress. However, encouragement of autonomy within a context of attachment provides an optimal environment for psychosocial adjustment (Connel and Wellborn, 1990; Baltes and Silverberg, 1994; Noller, 1994; Ryan, 1995; Silverberg and Gondoli, 1996).

Several studies have demonstrated that autonomy as well as relatedness in parent-adolescent interactions is related to several important indices of adjustment including educational and occupational attainment (Bell et al., 1996), psychopathology and drug use (Allen and Hauser, 1996; Allen et al., 1995), attachment security and coherence of mind in attachment relationships (Allen and Hauser, 1996). Whereas an imbalance in the dynamics between autonomy and relatedness, either an emotionally detached or an enmeshed relationship, is often associated with poor concurrent and longitudinal adjustment (Frank et al., 1988; Moore 1987; Ryan and Lynch, 1989).

Allen et al. (1994a) noted that adolescents who displayed comparatively low levels of autonomy and relatedness also exhibited low levels of ego development and self-esteem. Adolescent’s poor self-concept has been related to depression, anxiety, irritability and aggressive impulses (Rosenberg, 1985). Whereas, autonomous individuals are found to be more ego resilient, less anxious, and less hostile than insecure individuals (Allen et al., 2002; Kobak and Sceery, 1988; Zimmermann, 1999). Similarly, Sheikholeslami and Moghaddam (2010) found negative correlations between autonomy and depression, anxiety, somatic symptoms and social dysfunction. Loevinger (1979) proposed that higher levels of ego development in past reflect sophistication in considering issues of autonomy and relatedness in social relationships. Ego development has been related to numerous observed qualities of social functioning, interpersonal sensitivity and responsibility and inner control (Helson and Wink, 1987; Rosznafsky, 1981).

Ryan Lynch (1989) reported that autonomy and relatedness in parent-adolescent interactions influence adolescents developing models of self-in-relationship which further influence their self-esteem. A number of studies found that adolescents’ self-esteem is promoted by parents who are accepting, who communicate with their adolescents and who do not over regulate their adolescents (LaVoie, 1976; Douvan and Adelson, 1966).
Deci and Ryan (1987) proposed that in supportive families where adolescents are encouraged to make their own choices, positive psychosocial outcomes such as higher self-esteem, a better physical and psychological health will occur. Allowing autonomy within warmly given appropriate constraints enables the adolescents to explore personal limits and discover inner competencies. Allen and Hauser (1996) proposed that parental autonomy support during adolescence has been shown to predict secure attachment and healthy adjustment in early adulthood. Barber et al. (2002) and Gray and Steinberg (1999) also suggested that parental autonomy support facilitates adolescents feeling of well-being and thus make them more motivated and competitive. Adolescents who report a positive relationship with their parents, and who feel comfortable turning to them for support, have been found to have a greater sense of mastery of their worlds (Paterson et al., 1995) and to experience less loneliness (Kerns and Stevens, 1996). Adolescents self reports of autonomy and relatedness vis-à-vis parents have been linked to a range of positive outcomes, including better adjustment to separation, higher assertion and dating competence, greater resistance to peer pressure, higher self-esteem, lower rates of reported loneliness after leaving home to attend college (Kenny, 1987; Moore, 1987; Ryan and Lynch, 1989).

Allen et al. (1994b) found that adolescents who at 14 years of age were low in autonomy from parents were likely to be depressed at 16 years of age. In another study, Allen, Hauser, Bell and O’Connor (1994a) reported gains in self-esteem at 16 years of age among adolescents whose fathers had provided both challenges and support in their interaction with adolescents at 14 years of age.

Leibman (1998) noted that among moderately at-risk adolescents, difficulty in asserting autonomy in disagreement with the father have been shown to predict report of increased depressed mood over time. Phillips (2001) found that undermining autonomy and relatedness in disagreements with the mother predicts change in depressed mood over time. Noom et al. (1999) proposed that adolescents who are autonomous and who have a good relationship with both their fathers and mothers are most satisfied about themselves.

Furthermore, evidences suggest that difficulties in establishing autonomy and relatedness with parents were linked to both depressed affect and externalizing behaviors.
However, depressed and internalizing affect was more closely linked to difficulties in establishing autonomy, whereas externalizing behaviors were more closely linked to difficulties in maintaining relatedness (Allen et al., 1994a; Gjerde and Block, 1991).

Cooper et al. (1983) investigated the effects of individuality and connectedness of psychosocial competence. They concluded that adolescents who express a balance between individuality and connectedness in the parent-adolescent relationship will experience the most positive outcomes (e.g. being capable of expressing their own separate opinions and at the same time, understanding other’s point of view).

Lamborn and Steinberg (1993) examined the difference in psychosocial adjustment of diverse autonomy-connected subgroups. These authors identified four groups of subjects on the basis of emotional autonomy and perceived support from parents-

**Individuated:** High emotional autonomy and high perceived support. They reported high levels of academic competence and psychosocial adjustment but also high levels of internal distress.

**Connected:** Low emotional autonomy and high perceived support. They reported high levels of academic competence and low levels of psychological maladjustment.

**Detached:** High emotional autonomy and low perceived support. They reported low levels of psychosocial development and academic competence and higher levels of psychological maladjustment.

**Ambivalent:** Low emotional autonomy and low perceived support. They reported low psychosocial development and academic competence and high levels of internal distress.

The authors reported that individuated as compared to detached, connected or ambivalent adolescents, experienced the best outcome regarding psychosocial maturity and academic competence. Nevertheless, individuated adolescents also reported experiencing more internal distress than connected adolescents. The researchers argue that having higher level of emotional autonomy may be somewhat stressful for the
adolescents. However, successful management of this freedom may lead to healthier adjustment later in life.

Lamborn and Steinberg (1993) further concluded that in the context of supportive familial relationship, emotional autonomy has some advantages such as increased behavioral competence whereas in non supportive family environment adolescents evinced negative developmental outcomes independent of the level of emotional autonomy. They concluded that the meaning of emotional autonomy varies by family climate due to the relational nature of autonomy construct.

Conversely, Fuhrman and Holmbeck (1995) concluded that in a negative family environment, emotional autonomy was adaptive because it separated youth from poor home situation, while in positive family environment, emotional autonomy was maladaptive because it separated adolescents from positive home situation.

The inconsistent results indicate the controversial debate on the pros and cons of the adaptive value of the adolescents’ autonomy and also reflect on the multifaceted nature of emotional autonomy development.

Beside parents, relationship with peers also influences the psychosocial adjustment of adolescents. Research has found that perceived friendship quality, peer support or attachment to friends is positively associated with self-esteem (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Buhrmester and Yin, 1997; Keefe and Berndt, 1996; Ryan, Stiller and Lynch, 1994) and negatively associated with depressive symptoms (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987) and psychological disturbance (Buhrmester, 1996).

Adolescents who express greater satisfaction with their peers typically report feeling better about themselves than those who express less satisfaction with peers. However, in a longitudinal study Keefe and Berndt (1996) found that friendship support did not significantly predict changes over time in self-esteem. Whereas, Buhrmester and Yin (1997) reported that quality of friendship among adolescents significantly predicted psychological adjustment two years later.
Noom et al. (1999) proposed that attachment to peers is strongly related to social competence and self-esteem but also increases the chances of engagement in problems behavior; whereas attachment to parents is positively related to academic competence and self-esteem and reduces the engagement in problem behavior and feelings of depression.

In sum, the quality of relationship with parents and peers both play an important role in several aspects of psychosocial adjustment of adolescents. The quality of relationship with parents is more important for psychosocial adjustment than the quality of relationship with peers. The research indicates that successful negotiation of stage-salient developmental task of adolescence (establishing emotional autonomy while maintaining connectedness with significant others) have implications not only for concurrent adjustment but also for successful resolution of later developmental tasks.

2.4 EMOTIONAL AUTONOMY AND GENDER DIFFERENCES

Autonomy is a key developmental task of adolescents for both the sexes (Douvan and Adelson, 1966; Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986; Dornbusch et al., 2001; Bosma et al., 1996; Greenberger, 1984). In adolescence boys and girls strive to move toward acquiring independence and full adult responsibilities (Cicchetti and Rogosch, 2002). However, gender differences lay different paths for boys and girls in developing autonomy.

Moore (1987) demonstrated that adolescent males and females differ in the ways that they experience autonomy from their parents. Steinberg (1987) and Gilligan (1982) found that girls are socialized toward more dependence and connectedness, whereas boys are socialized toward more independence. Therefore, the establishment of autonomy requires parents to make more efforts in promoting individuation among daughters and connectedness with sons.

Boys are more engaged in establishing independence from parental control than girls. Boys are found to be less likely to accept parental regulations as appropriate. In contrast to boys, research supports that girls are more emotionally dependent on their parents than boys (Moore, 1987). Girls remain closer to their parents than boys (Kenny, 1987; Ryan and Lynch, 1989; Newman, 1989; Frank et al., 1990). Similarly, Bekker and Van Assen (2008) reported that in young adults, women have been found to score much
higher on sensitivity to others than men and men have been found to score slightly higher on self-awareness and capacity for managing new situations than women.

Fullwinder-Bush and Jacovitz (1993) proposed that parental encouragement of autonomy coupled with close parent-adolescent relationship promotes increased identity exploration in adolescent daughters. However, families usually initiate daughters toward more relational exploration characterized by relationships with friends and intimate partners instead of promoting ideological exploration in areas of career, occupation and politics. As a result, pursuing autonomy may become particularly challenging for girls (Basow and Rubin, 1999). On the other hand, Noom et al. (1999) hold that boys are encouraged more than girls to think about their future and to take steps to achieve their goals, as a result boys have a more positive perception of their attitudinal and functional autonomy. In general, boys are more positive about their abilities than girls which in turn facilitate their development of emotional autonomy.

Bumpus et al. (2001) hold that girls in families marked by traditional maternal gender role attitude were granted fewer autonomy opportunities. Becoming autonomous was a more stressful experience for girls than for boys (Beyers and Goosens, 1999; Lamborn and Steinberg, 1993). Girls in general, demonstrate higher levels of enmeshment and separation anxiety (Holmbeck and Wandrei, 1993; Beyers and Goosens, 1999; Lamborn and Stienberg, 1993) which in turn result in their lower capacity for achieving behavioral autonomy.

Cross and Madson (1997) found that parents monitor the behavior of their daughters more than their sons. Moreover, although parents exert similar levels of control on the behavior of their daughters and sons, some investigations have shown subtle differences in how this control is exerted. Pomerantz and Ruble (1998) demonstrated that mothers are equally likely to employ control with their daughters and their sons, but are more likely to apply control without granting autonomy with daughters. Such differences in socialization are likely to be associated not only with lesser self-efficacy for autonomous behavior in girls (Bussey and Bandura, 1999) but also with the less positive views of the self. Furthermore, daughters more than sons are encouraged to attend to other’s need, to conform to others’ expectations and to judge their success or failure in
terms of acceptance by others (Dunn et al., 1987; Smetana, 1989). This kind of practice in turn undermines the development of emotional autonomy in girls.

Although relational theorists (Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan and Wiggins, 1988) have described a relatively greater importance of relationships in the lives of girls, existing studies have not indicated consistent gender differences. Cross-sectional studies of gender differences in parental attachment in early and middle adolescence have indicated that levels of parental attachment are similar for boys and girls (Armsden et al., 1990; Greenberg et al., 1983; Kenny et al., 1993; Ryan and Lynch, 1989).

Stewart et al. (2000) found that adolescent females perceive their parents as more autonomy granting than adolescent males. In general, female adolescents report warmer and closer relations with their parents than male adolescents (Matos et al., 1999; Mayseless et al., 1998; Stewart et al., 2000) and display higher levels of emotional autonomy (Beyers and Goosens, 1999; Lamborn and Steinberg, 1993). In sum, Rich (1990) maintained that while adolescent males define themselves through separation, female adolescents form a sense of self through connectedness. Moore (1987) suggested that establishing independence may have negative implications for males but not for females.

For girls, the emotional proximity with parents is clearly a positive factor for their well-being as well as for their adjustment in many situations. Schulthesis and Blustein (1994) found that girls who are emotionally attached to both parents develop academic purpose and autonomy. A close relationship with parents seems to be a healthy element for psychosocial development in girls. Borresen and Rosenvinge (2003) and Fleming (2005) found that girls report more autonomous choice of dress and hair style as compared to boys. Whereas, boys exhibit more exploration activity outside the family milieu as compared to girls.

Studies indicate that girls develop emotional autonomy more rapidly and become self-reliant and thus are able to resist peer pressure (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986). They found that emotional autonomy scores were higher for females than male
adolescents. In contrast, Ryan and Lynch (1989), Coleman (1961), Fleming (2005) found boys to be more autonomous. However, Rosenthal and Bornholt (in press) found no differences between girls and boys. Hauser et al. (1987) found no differences in the interaction patterns of boys and girls. Youniss and Ketterlinus (1987) found no sex differences in boys and girls reports of how well their parents know them or how much they value their parents’ opinion of them. Montemayor and Brownlee (1987) found no difference in the nature and extent of or expressed satisfaction in sons and daughters activities with parents.

Fleming (2005) studied the differences between girls and boys for the desire and the achievement of autonomy. He reported that boys and girls exhibit more or less similar desire for autonomy. However, gender differences appear regarding achievement of autonomy. Boys show a higher rate of achievement of autonomy earlier than girls. Moreover, boys achieved autonomy earlier than the girls. He also found that the most significant gender differences occurred around middle adolescence i.e. distinction between boys and girls accelerated at 16 years of age.

Several studies have indicated that the gender differences in autonomy gaining process occurs generally due to gender specific parental socialization practices. Research evidences suggest that mothers and fathers play different roles in the psychosocial development of their sons and daughters.

Grotevant and Cooper (1985) observed that fathers are more tolerant of their son’s assertiveness than they are of their daughters’ quest for individuation. Boys identify with their father more at a young age; their family relationships become less intense and more depersonalized. In contrast, girls identify with and find it difficult to break the intra psychic and interpersonal ties that bind them to their mothers and do not resolve their oedipal conflicts to the same extent as boys. As adults, women develop a greater capacity for emotional closeness than men, but they also remain entangled in and preoccupied with family relationships. In particular, the daughter-mother relationships continues to be especially close but the daughter’s unresolved and ambivalent struggle for greater separateness often tinges this relationship with strong emotional conflict.
Numerous studies have found that adolescents are closer to their mothers, while fathers having less interaction are perceived as less caring than mothers (Rice and Mulkeen, 1995; Youniss and Ketterlinus, 1987; Youniss and Smollar, 1985). Adolescents perceive their mothers as more demanding and responsive than fathers (Paulson and Sputa, 1996).

Noller and Callan (1990) reported that adolescent females talk more with their mothers while adolescent males share greater communication with their fathers. Further, they found that adolescents see their mothers as frequent initiators of conversations. Mothers, rather than fathers are also more open to adolescents’ opinion (Noller and Callan, 1990). Therefore, adolescents interact more with their mothers and share warmer relationship with them than with their fathers. Hosley and Monetemayor (1997) also concluded that adolescents view their relationship with their fathers as more distant and estranged. In contrast, mothers are perceived as more warm and affectionate.

However, Kenny and Gallagher (2002) and Noom et al. (1999) highlighted that both adolescent males and females perceive their fathers as fostering more autonomy than their mothers. Similarly, Allen et al. (1994a) also found fathers as fostering the qualities for autonomous-relatedness in adolescents whereas mother’s behavior better predicted ego development in adolescents.

Bartle-Haring (1997) pointed out that adolescent male and female identities are shaped by differential relationship with father and endorsement of stereotypical masculine and feminine traits. Noom et al. (1999) found that attachment to father is positively related to all dimensions of autonomy. A good relationship with father based on trust and communication appears to be crucial in the development of adolescents’ independence.

In sum, research indicates that fathers have a more influential function with respect to stimulating independence and encouraging individuality. In contrast, mothers have a more caring function in terms of providing support and monitoring their children (Noom et al. 1999), suggesting that both fathers and mothers are crucial for fostering the skills for autonomous functioning in adolescents.
2.5 EMOTIONAL AUTONOMY AND OTHER FAMILIAL VARIABLES

The family is a complex and dynamic institution in India existing in the form of nuclear and joint families. Joint family is the common feature of traditional Indian society (Caldwell et al., 1988; Conklin, 1976; Khatri, 1975). But now, Indian society is taking a U-turn and now people prefer to live in nuclear families. Niranjan et al. (1998), Freed and Freed (2000) and Chakravorty and Singh (1991) have found that over years, such nuclear families are on rise in almost all parts of the country and this is happening as a result of industrialization and urbanization (Agarwala, 1962; Cohen, 1981).

Sinha (1984) has reported that due to small size and limited number of adults in nuclear families there are closer bonds and intense parent-child relations. Adolescents in nuclear families are likely to enjoy greater autonomy, independence and initiative when compared with children from joint families. Socialization practices are also less harsh for the developing child. Conversely, in a typical joint family, symbiotic relationships are promoted and separation-individuation is inhibited.

Ojha and Sinha (1982) recognized the nuclear and extended family structure in India as being instrumental in giving rise to distinct parental styles. The authoritarian parental style is seen to be more of a trademark with the extended family system because to survive it needs its members to readily cooperate. In addition, extended families provide less freedom for children and adolescents to explore their surrounding and function in an independent manner. This often leads to conflict among family members. On the other hand, in nuclear families emphasis on individuation leads to democratic parenting style. In sum, social change is evident in the distinct preference for small families as well as in adolescents increased demand for autonomy and egalitarian relationships.

In addition, family’s SES can also influence the development of emotional autonomy in adolescents. Parents form higher SES levels tend to utilize reasoning, self-direction and negotiation in their parenting to teach the value of working together, taking initiative and self-direction. In contrast, lower SES parents have high authority and conformity requirements and often place an emphasis on obedience and conformity and...
are likely to use coercive and punitive measures in their parenting strategies (Peterson and Leigh, 1990; Pinderhughes et al., 2000).

Studies reported that parents from middle or upper class as compared with those from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds are more likely to promote independence and socialization even in young children (Clark and Ladd, 2000; Conger et al., 1994). Still further, other studies reported that families who belong to lower SES households tend to have higher work demands and less work flexibility; further, high work demands have been associated with parents spending less time with their children (Almeida 2004) and less awareness of children’s whereabouts (Bumpus et al. 2006).

Larson et al. (2001) suggested that among the urban middle class, fathers are becoming more involved in parenting and gender differences in their interaction with their children are less marked than before. Whereas, Saraswathi (1999) found that parental involvement and control is very high, especially in the middle class. Parents set high aspirations and become active participants in adolescents’ academic achievement. Peterson and Hann, (1999) reported that white color parents tend to use more moderate, rational forms of control as means of encouraging such attributes as autonomy, self-control and individual achievement.

Although most of the research on the adolescents’ family relationships has focused on relationship with parents, interest in adolescents’ relationship with their siblings and the influence of these relationships on adolescents’ development has increased over time. Several studies indicate that relationship with siblings is important sources of companionship, affection and intimacy (Buhrmester and Furman, 1990; Lempers and Clark-Lempers, 1992). During childhood, children perceive their siblings as playmates (Yenes et al. 2000), while during adolescence this function becomes that of providing the support and intimacy required during the moment of complex socio-emotional and cognitive changes.

Adolescents feel more comfortable to talk with and seek help from their siblings than from their parents regarding certain issues like dating and trying out ideas (Cotterell, 1996; Moser et al., 1996; Tucker et al., 1997), this practice in turn facilitates the sense of
emotional autonomy in adolescents. Moser et al. (1996) proposed that siblings share more equal status and relatively more equal power. Adolescents are likely to feel understood and respected by their siblings and share more similar view with their siblings. In addition, a better relationship with brothers and sisters leads to better adjustment during adolescence. Besides parental and peer support, greater support from siblings has been longitudinally associated with lower levels of internalizing and externalizing behavior, particularly when girls perceive more support from an older brother (Brange et al., 2004).

The quality of the sibling relationship has also been found to vary by birth order. Older siblings are perceived as more domineering and more nurturing than are later born siblings, while later born siblings admire and feel closer to their older brothers and sisters than their older siblings feel towards them. (Furman and Buhrmester, 1992). According to social learning theory, older siblings are seen as models for younger siblings but older siblings are seen as effective models only if younger siblings perceive their older siblings as likable and nurturing, so that the younger siblings wants to be around and learn from them (Whiteman and Buchanan, 2002). Conclusively, the researchers hold that the development of emotional autonomy is directly influenced by the kind of family environment prevalent and the extent of relationship with significant others.

In sum, the studies reviewed in this section provide empirical support for the notion that renegotiation of relationships with parents, rather than separation from them is at the core of the development of emotional autonomy. As adolescents become more emotionally autonomous from parents, they turn to peers for company and support. However, parents and peers can behave in ways that are either autonomy-granting or coercive, which in turn can influence the adaptive capacities of the adolescents. Moreover, throughout life autonomy advances and declines as individual develop new competencies, previous skills declines and changing conditions require altered behavior. Overall, the interpersonal and intrapersonal transformations involved in the process of emotional autonomy paint a complex picture of the development of adolescents’ emotional autonomy.