

IMPACT OF PARENTAL WARMTH ON THE PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT OF MIDDLE- AND WORKING CLASS CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the present study was to examine social class differences in perceived parental warmth and its effects on personality dispositions of middle and working class children. The Urdu version of Child PARQ and the Child PAQ were administered on a sample of 186 school children (age ranging 7-12 years), belonging to middle- and working class families. The t-tests indicated significant mean differences on Child PARQ as well as on Child PAQ scores, among middle and working class children.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between socio-economic status and parental attitudes and behavior has long been of interest to scholars from a number of disciplines (Hess, 1970). In the US, higher SES parents i.e. professionally employed adults with college or further education are generally less controlling, use fewer power assertion techniques and use more reasoning in disciplining their children than lower SES parents i.e. unskilled or semi-skilled workers having high school or less education (Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby, 1980). There is less agreement about differences between these two SES groups in terms of the warmth/ affection parents give to their children. Maccoby (1980) reported that higher SES families in the U.S. show more affection towards their children than lower SES families. Research findings by Rohner and Associates (1980) suggest that the SES differences in perceived parental warmth and affection need more explanations than simple SES factor.

In the light of the studies concerning the relationship between socio-economic status and parental warmth give conflicting

results. American studies related to parental acceptance rejection indicate no social class difference in the mainstream working class versus middle class sample (Rohner, Roll & Rohner, 1980). However, perceived acceptance does vary in different social classes among some ethnic minorities. For example, working class Korean American children perceived their parents to be less warm, more neglecting, more rejecting than did middle class Korean American children (Rohner, et.al, 1980). In a Mexican sample, however middle class children perceived their parents to be less warm, more aggressive, more neglecting than did their working class counterparts. PAR Theory predicts that parental rejection has consistent negative effects on the psychological adjustment as well as on behavioral functioning of both children and adults worldwide (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002).

Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PART) tries to explain and discover why, and under what conditions, parents all around the world are most likely to accept or reject their children. Further, the theory (PART) predicts that parental acceptance-rejection is universally associated with a specific cluster of traits, including hostility/aggression, dependency, low self-evaluation, emotional instability, emotional unresponsiveness and negative world-view. Parental Acceptance and Rejection have been shown in the United States and in cross-cultural researches, to affect the emotional, behavioral and social cognitive development of children, as well as their psychological functioning and well-being as adults (Rohner, 1999).

To date the scholars in Pakistan have conducted several studies with a number of variables (for example, social class & gender differences, family structure differences, schooling status, etc.). Some studies have also been done with aggressive and criminal subjects. There is single evidence in Pakistan regarding the relationship between maternal warmth and SES factor conducted by Haque (1987). It provided an impetus to researchers of this study to work with Parental (both parents') treatment effect on their children personality in terms of SES factor because the earlier study (Haque, 1987) measured personality development of middle

and working class children in terms of only maternal (i.e. mothers') treatment. For the last two decades there is a increasing concern of psychologists to measure personality variables of children by using the combine effects of both parents rather only one, so the researchers utilized both version of Child PARQ (i.e. mother as well as father).

Additionally, the researchers selected the sample from different sections of the Hyderabad city including Latifabad, City area and Qasimabad in order to make the sample more representatives for the Hyderabad city.

Haque (1987) examined social class differences in perceived maternal acceptance-rejection and personality dispositions in male and female high school students of Latifabad, Hyderabad. The Urdu version of Child PARQ and Child PAQ were administered on a sample of 200 boys and girls belonging to middle and working class families. The results indicated no social class differences either in boys or girls' sample. However, the boys coming from working class families perceived their mothers to be more neglecting than the middle class boys. Later the PARQ and PAQ scores were pooled to examine gender differences. The combined middle and working class results revealed that boys perceived their mothers to be significantly less warm and more rejecting on all Child PARQ variables than the girls did. The results were explained by the author in terms of power assertion technique used by mothers in disciplining the male child to learn a 'good boy'. Additionally, the total PARQ scores of both sexes were found highly correlated with total PAQ scores, providing support to parental acceptance-rejection theory (PART) developed by Rohner (1975).

In the northern part of Pakistan, a lady Professor of Peshawar university Riaz, 1991 examined differences in three different family structures (e.g. both parent's families, step-parent families and single parent (broken homes) families). The data clearly demonstrates that subjects coming from step-parent families perceived not only their mothers but also fathers to be significantly

less warm, more aggressive, more neglecting and more rejecting as compared to the subjects belonging to well-adjusted both-parent families. Compared to well-adjusted and broken families, the subjects in step-parent families had more negative perceptions of their own personality dispositions. The findings of the study are consistent with Rohner's (1975) parental acceptance-rejection theory.

In the second study with Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire and self-esteem Questionnaire, (Riaz, 1996) investigated to see whether self-esteem of adolescents varies directly with perceived maternal acceptance-rejection. Furthermore, Riaz (1996) assumed that adolescents from step-mother families would have lower self-esteem as compared to adolescents from monogamous families. The results indicated that adolescents coming from polygamous families perceived their step-mothers to be significantly less warm, more aggressive, more neglecting and more rejecting as compared to subjects' evaluations of maternal behavior in monogamous families. Consequently, significantly lower self-esteem was found among subjects brought up in polygamous families than brought up in monogamous families. The correlational analyses indicated perceived maternal warmth to be positively associated with self-esteem scores of adolescents both from monogamous as well as polygamous families on all the PARQ variables, indicating consistency with cross-cultural findings.

The third child PARQ and Child PAQ study in the northern part of Pakistan was conducted in respect of schooling status and perceived parental behavior (Jahangir & Tahir, 1999). The study indicated that schooling status influenced parental acceptance/rejection, personality assessment and self-concept. The correlational analysis showed that Child PARQ scales were significantly related to PAQ scales.

Several researchers in Pakistan got interested in the studies concerning styles of parenting and aggressive & criminal behavior. Refail & Haque (1999) from Sindh University examined the

relationships between perceived parental acceptance-rejection and Juvenile delinquency scores of criminal and non-criminal adolescents. The results found total PARQ (both Mother and Father Versions) scores to be positively associated with Juvenile delinquency scores. An earlier study in Sindh university (Abro, 1988) tested the hypothesis that habitual criminals would perceive lesser warmth and greater aggression, neglect and undifferentiated rejection than the non-habitual criminals would. The results provided clear evidence in respect of perceived maternal rejection for the habitual criminals.

S. Babree (1997) at the National Institute of Psychology (Islamabad) used Urdu version of Child PARQ with aggressive and non-aggressive children. The aggressive children perceived less warmth and more undifferentiated rejection both from their fathers and mothers.

The main purpose of the present study was to examine middle and working class differences in perceived parental warmth and its effects on personality dispositions of school children. The major focus of the investigation was to make comparison by using Rohner's instruments over two groups i.e., middle and lower class sample, in order to observe if there is any difference in perceived parental warmth and consequent personality dispositions among middle and lower class school children.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

The two groups of the students were chosen from different high schools in Hyderabad city. The researchers selected half of the sample from the schools located in the middle class population areas and the rest half from those areas of the city, which is populated by working families. The first criterion of the choice of sample demanded that the two groups be living in different sections of the city in order to become representative sample of the Hyderabad city. The method for the selection of participants of the study was stratified random sampling. Socio-economic status of each subject was determined with the help of check-list which

comprised: Father's education, father's occupation, mother's education and status of mothers, residential area and total monthly income of the family etc.

INSTRUMENTS

In this study, two self-report questionnaires, the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaires (Child PARQ) and Personality Assessment Questionnaires (Child PAQ) developed by Rohner, Saavedra and Granum (1978) were used.

Parental Acceptance- Rejection Questionnaire (Child PARQ):

Children (age range 7-12 years) reported perceptions of their parent's acceptance/ rejection behavior on the child version of the PARQ. The Child PARQ consists of 60 items that ask children to reflect on their experiences of acceptance rejection within their families. It is made up of four separate scales. The scales are warmth/ affection, hostility/ aggression, indifference /neglect and undifferentiated rejection. Evidence regarding the validity and reliability of the PARQ (Rohner, et al 2003b) demonstrates that this measure is psychometrically sound.

Personality Assessment Questionnaire (Child PAQ)

Child PAQ attempts to measure children's perceptions of their own personality and behavioral dispositions which includes seven behavioral dispositions consisting of six items in each scale, making a total of 42 items in all. The reliability and validity study of the Child PAQ were originally carried out on a sample of 220 children. For the child PAQ alphas ranged from 0.46 to 0.74 with a median reliability of 0.63(Rohner, et al., 1978).

PROCEDURE

In our investigation the Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) the Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ) and an interview was used. The interview was carried out first. Then, the Child PARQ questionnaire was applied; the said questionnaire takes about 15 to 20 minutes to be filled out by the child. Next, the PAQ took the same amount of time for its completion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data was analyzed to see differences between middle and working class children in terms of the subjects' perceptions of parental warmth (both maternal and paternal) by computing t-tests. Table 1 & Table 2 present means, S.D., and t-values for Child PARQ scale.

TABLE-1
MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION AND t-VALUES FOR CHILD PARQ SCORES (MOTHER, REFERENT) OF MIDDLE-AND LOWER CLASS CHILDREN

Scale child PARQ (Mother, referent)	Middle class Children		Lower class Children		T	P
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Less warmth/affection	31.55	7.11	35.83	8.72	2.77	.01
Hostility/aggression	29.67	7.76	30.67	8.03	0.89	NS
Neglect/indifference	30.29	5.41	35.50	2.42	6.51	.001
Rejection/undifferentiated	21.47	6.20	23.50	4.25	3.37	.001
Total PARQ	112.98	20.63	128.80	7.52	5.34	.001

Df=184

TABLE -2
MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION AND t- VALUES FOR CHILD PARQ SCORES (FATHER, REFERENT) OF MIDDLE- AND LOWER CLASS CHILDREN

Scale	Middle class Children		Lower class Children			
Children PARQ	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	T	P
Father, referent						
Less warmth/affection	28.77	6.16	32.92	7.48	4.96	.001
Hostility/aggression	24.25	5.71	29.88	5.67	2.27	.05
Neglect/indifference	24.70	4.71	33.31	5.42	9.35	.001
Rejection/undifferentiated	15.33	3.84	21.71	3.32	8.44	.001
Total PARQ	91.50	13.97	117.83	16.05	8.26	.001

Df=184

The results indicated social class differences in children's perceptions of parental warmth. Thus, confirming the first hypothesis of the study which states that middle class children would perceive greater parental acceptance as compared to lower class children. The findings are consistent with earlier research findings by Rohner and Rohner, 1982; Maccoby, 1980, Polat, 1988 where middle class children perceived greater acceptance as compared to lower class children.

Before evaluating social class differences we should mention here that in both social classes children reported a substantial amount of parental love i.e., in both sample groups, children's PARQ scores (both Mother/ Father, referent) are within the range of acceptance. The comparison of Middle and Lower class subjects on PARQ scales suggests a rather similar pattern. Because the direction is the same (i.e., acceptance) in both the groups, but the differences were significantly greater for the middle class children. The differences between the social classes may be due to the fact that middle class and the lower class have different levels of education and income. Mostly families of the lower class children came from a rural background though they are now living in urban settings. Kagitcibasi (1987) found that the greater the extent of rural-urban mobility, the more salient is the love and companionship value of the children.

TABLE -3
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND t- VALUES FOR CHILD PAQ
SCORES OF MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASS CHILDREN

Scale	Middle class Children		Lower class Children			
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	T	P
Hostility/aggression	14.02	4.47	10.97	3.65	5.43	.001
Dependency	16.24	2.17	14.82	3.09	2.41	.05
Negative/Self esteem	12.08	4.27	10.56	3.11	2.13	.05
Negative/Self adequacy	12.06	3.26	11.51	3.38	0.33	NS
Emotional/unresponsive	12.78	30.60	11.56	3.00	1.00	NS
Emotional/instability	16.18	3.90	14.25	3.05	3.78	.001
Negative world view	12.41	21.10	10.07	3.19	5.70	.001
Total Child PSAQ	95.76	21.01	83.25	15.62	8.76	.001

df=184

Table 3 is based on second hypothesis of study which states that the scores of lower class children would be greater on child PAQ scores as compared to middle class children. It is clear from table 3 that our results are contrary to our hypothesis i.e. lower class children have a better personality disposition than their middle class counterparts. Here a question arises that while lower class children have a perception of less parental warmth as compared to middle class children, why their PAQ scores are not

higher in the same direction? The answer may lie in the normal prevailing parental behavior for lower class children. Although they are receiving less parental warmth as compared to middle class children yet such parental behavior is taken as normal by the lower class children and therefore, it is not affecting the personality organization of lower class children in negative direction. Here, social comparison process (Festinger, 1954, Gerard and Rabbee. 1961) plays a role. Rohner and Associates (1996) hold that, physical punishment is associated with children's psychological maladjustment only if punishment is seen by youths as a form of caretaker's rejection.

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