

MOTHER'S WARMTH AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS: A RELATIONAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to see the relationship between perceived mother's warmth (an important ingredient of maternal acceptance) and positive relationship with others. It was hypothesized that perceived mother's warmth would be positively correlated with positive relations with others. A sample of 200 students (100 male, 100 female), of ages 20-25 years were randomly sampled from educational institutions. The participants provided their consent and demographic information and filled following questionnaires; (1) Perceived Maternal Warmth Sub-scale of Adult PAQR/CONTROL: Mother (Short form) (Rohner, 2004), (2) positive relationship with others sub scale of Psychological Wellbeing Scales (Ryff, 1995). Statistical analysis indicates that perceived mother's warmth is positively correlated with positive relationship with others. Avenues for future researches are also suggested.

Keywords: Warmth, acceptance, interpersonal relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Parenting and its effects on personality have remained a topic of interest for Religion, Philosophy and Psychology since ever. For instance, the 18th century philosopher Rousseau stressed very much on parenting and did not consider any innate tendencies in child but according to him, everything in a child is learned (Delany, 2005). Freud considers parent-child relationship as the most important factor in personality development (Freud, 1900). The initial psychosexual conflicts are related to parent child relationship (for instance Trust Vs Mistrust, Autonomy Vs compliance etc.). Freud and his paradigm contributed a lot to the scientific understanding of how parenting effects on what a person becomes. The word acceptance is derived from the Latin verb acquiescere that means, to find rest in. In Psychology this word is used to express the recognition of the reality of something without changing it. Acceptance is a central concept of Abrahamic religions. One of the meanings of the word Islam is also acceptance (McDowell, Josh & Stewart, 1983).

“Acceptance” became a subject of interest for

Psychology after the advent of cognitive approach to Psychology. It brought new insight towards parenting. Some researchers explored perceptions (or cognitive representations) of childhood experiences and their emotional aspects to know how it contributed in current personality (Rohner, 2005). The word Warmth, if translated literally refers to a state of being warm in temperature (Merriam-Webster, 2013). The term is more often used for being warm in feeling. In current research the term is used in the context of feeling. The word feeling is also from the realm of Psychology of perception. It refers to the tactile sense of something. But the word is not just limited to the touch sensation but also refers to emotional reactions and states (Merriam-Webster, 2013). A study on quality of mother child relationship by Patterson, Cohn, and Kao (1989) suggests that the children who receive low level of warmth by their mothers and are rejected by their peers have more behavioural problems and are less competent than other children. Imam (2004) also report present similar findings. A study by Kim (2008) on Korean American adolescents suggest that perceived lower maternal warmth is positively related to poor psychological adjustment of adolescents.

Positive relationship with others is an aspect of wellbeing is very much related to the social life of an individual. The word positive is derived from the lexicon of mathematics this makes it, at times misleading. The word "Positive" is at times used with a connotation of essentially good or healthy attached to it but at times it is used in a neutral sense. For instance the term positive reinforcement does not apply that it would reinforce something "positive" or "healthy" in behaviour of the organism but simply it is used to denote that it is done through adding something (i.e. giving a gift to a child, a food item a pigeon etc.). But in the wellbeing context the word Positive is with the connotation of being essentially good. A positive relationship is a mutually fulfilling phenomenon. It is not only getting benefits from others but also serving and supporting them. According to Ryff and Keyes (1995), a positive relation gives an understanding of the mutual barter of happiness and it has the element of trust in it. According to him the welfare of others is also considered in a positive relationship. He also included the element of empathy and warmth. The last element discussed is of prime importance to this paper as it is attempts to investigate the perceived maternal warmth and its relations with wellbeing. For this study it was hypothesized that perceived mother's warmth will be positively correlated with positive relationship with others.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling

For this study a sample of 200, (100 male and 100 females) between ages 20-25 (Mean age=19.81, SD=1.863) was randomly selected from educational institutions of Karachi-Pakistan. For this purpose 2 reputable educational institutions i.e. University of Karachi and Iqra University (Gulshan-e-Iqbal and North Nazimabad campuses) were approached. The entire sample was taken from student population. The students who participated in this research were enrolled in BBA (30.5%), BS (62.5%) and Masters Programs (7%). Almost 100% of the participants described their marital status as single (except only one case). The sample belonged to middle and upper middle socio economic strata and were unemployed (fulltime students).

Procedure

University of Karachi and Iqra University were selected for data collection. These reputed universities were contacted for concept. The universities were visited and some departments were randomly selected. List of students were obtained for random sampling. The selected students were contacted and testing sessions were conducted for the selected students in classroom setting. Verbal and written consent was taken from students. Students were tested in classroom setting. The subjects were given the questionnaires and asked to answer the statements according to relevant scales. It was made sure that all the participants go through the same procedure of testing.

Measures

1. Demographic data sheet.

That will include items for getting information about participant's gender, age, date of birth, birth order, educational level, occupation, socio economic status, residential area and marital status. A special column will record if the parents of the respondent are alive or not.

2. Positive relationship with others sub scale of Psychological Wellbeing Scales (Ryff, 1995).

The complete scale has 6 dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, self-acceptance. Individuals respond to various statements and indicate on a 6-point Likert scale how true each statement is of them. For current research the positive relationship with others sub scale was used. Author report temporal stability and strong reliability and validity of the scale (Ryff, 1995).

3. Perceived Maternal Warmth Sub-scale from Adult PAQR/CONTROL: Mother (Short form) (Rohner, 2004).

The scale is based on the recollection of the perception of parenting of age 7-12 years. Various domains of mother's acceptance/rejection and control are tapped. The scale has 29 items and has a subscale of mother's warmth (physical, verbal and symbolic). Current research will only utilize the items maternal warmth subscale (8 items). Studies suggest strong

theoretical background and reliability and validity for this scale.

Data Analysis

Correlations were calculated for the given constructs (i.e. to test the hypothesis) through the Pearson product moment correlation. Descriptive statistics (i.e. measure of central tendencies, percentages etc) were also calculated. For these calculations statistical package for social sciences SPSS (12.0) was used.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were approached through proper channel i.e. concerned department were approached and after their consent students were approached. Students were asked for consent for the participation in this research. Those who agreed to participate marked their agreement through their signature in the consent form. Participants were made aware that they can leave the test at any point if they feel discomfort. They were assured that their name or identifying information will not appear in any part of research and will be used only for the research.

RESULTS

Table 1: Correlation between Perceived Mother's Warmth and Positive Relationship with Others

N=200

| | Perceived Mother's Warmth | Sig. |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|------|
| Positive Relationship with Others | .167* | .031 |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 5 indicates that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Perceived Mother's Warmth and Positive Relationship with Others, for the given sample is .167. The value is significant at 0.01 level i.e. there is a significant correlation between these two variables.

DISCUSSION

In accordance with the assumption of this study, there was a positive relationship found between perceived mother's warmth and positive relationships with others ($r= 0.167$, $p<0.05$). In consonance with this

finding, Rettner (2010) notes that the children who experienced more warmth in their childhood had better relationship with their partners in later life.

Freudian psychoanalysis laid much emphasis on the role of childhood experiences on the development of personality. Erickson (1968) outlined the conflicts of each psycho-sexual development (he also attempted to include a social facade to it). According to him the first stage of development (i.e. oral stage) is marked by the conflict of trust versus mistrust.

This stage lasts from the age of 0 to approx. 18 months. Erikson (1963) theorizes that trust versus mistrust stage is the most significant era in the life of a person. At this age the infant is completely dependent on his parents. The quality of care that s/he gets plays vital role in determining of the personality. At this age the child learns should s/he or should s/he not trust the people around? When the baby needs, does the parent attend to his/her needs? When the child is frightened, will someone comfort him/her? If the needs are properly dealt, the child will learn to trust the people. Otherwise s/he will develop mistrust for the people around him/her. The child who is able to develop trust for others will become more secure and will feel safe. The parents who are not consistent and emotionally deprive their children or reject them inculcate mistrust in their children. The child who is unable to trust others will ultimately have poor and unsatisfactory social relationships. The results of current study are in consonance with these theoretical assertions made by Erickson.

Theorists like Lidz (1949) consider cold by the mother's behaviour towards child as a cause of schizophrenia. And schizophrenia is also characterized by social isolation. Schizophrenics are unable to form deep social relationships and are not willing to trust others. Although Lidz's (1949) conceptualization of "Schizophrenogenic mother" is not accepted by the scientific circles that seek a biomedical understanding of schizophrenia, but If this conceptualizations are valid than it can be said that parenting has so much lasting effects on children that they remain with the person for life long.

Interpreting the results of hypothesis under discussion, with reference to John Bowlby's (1951) attachment theory's assumption that a child must develop a relationship with at least one caregiver in order to be normally in terms of social and emotional

grounds. Current results are in line with this assumption as perceived mother's warmth (that is a predictor of parent child bonding) is found a predictor of positive relationship with others. Combining the current results with the study Harry Harlow that investigated the early relationship between infant and parents suggests that the bonding that is formed early between parent and child is important for emotional behavior. It suggests that that isolation from mother's love makes child dysfunctional, sexually inapt and overly aggressive (Suomi & Leroy, 1982).

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