

MOTHER'S WARMTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL MASTERY: A RELATIONAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Current study was an attempt to see the relationship between perceived mother's warmth (an important ingredient of maternal acceptance) and environmental mastery (an element of psychological wellbeing). It was hypothesized that perceived mother's acceptance would be positively correlated with environmental mastery. A sample of 200 students (100 male, 100 female), of ages 20-25 years were randomly sampled from educational institutions of Karachi-Pakistan. 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) Environmental Mastery sub scale of Psychological Wellbeing Scales (Ryff, 1995). Statistical analysis revealed that perceived mother's warmth is positively correlated with environmental mastery. Avenues for future researches are also suggested.

Keywords: environmental mastery, perceived mother's warmth, Psychological well being, parenting, young adults

Introduction

The effect of parenting on an individual's personality has remained a topic of interest for literature, Philosophy and Psychology, since time immemorial. The 18th century philosopher Rousseau stressed on parenting and denied any innate tendencies in child. According to him, everything in a child is learned (Delany, 2005). Freudian psychoanalysis also considers parent-child relationship as the most important factor in personality development (Freud, 1900). According to this paradigm the initial psychosexual conflicts are related to parent child relationship (for instance Trust Vs Mistrust, Autonomy Vs compliance etc.). Psychoanalysis contributed a great deal to the scientific understanding of how parenting affects personality development.

The concept of "parental acceptance and rejection" is of monumental importance in the context of personality development and wellbeing of the individual. 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. It is a central concept of Abrahamic religion. 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. This approach 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).

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The other concept that the researcher wants to investigate with mother's warmth is Environmental Mastery. It is considered an ingredient of psychological wellbeing and according to Ryff and Keyes (1995) is a multi-dimensional construct that is related to how much a person feels competent in dealing with his/her environment, do complex array of tasks, getting maximum benefit out of the opportunities around him/her and affecting his/her context according to his/her needs and values. A person high in this dimension is an active agent rather than a passive recipient. He/she is able to deal with his problems in the environment and can easily cope with the demands of everyday life. This concept is similar to concept of "instrumental competence" given by Baumrind (1966) that is, the ability of a person to manipulate the environment to attain certain goals. Baumrind (1966) studied this concept in context of parenting styles.

Current study is an attempt to see the relation of these two concepts i.e. perceived mother's warmth and environmental mastery. For this study its hypothesized that perceived mother's warmth will be positively correlated with environmental mastery

Literature review

Parenting

Parenting and its effects have been a long discussed topic in social sciences. Only the empirical studies available on this topic are more than 1700 (Rohner, 2002). Many theorists/scientists contributed to the understanding of this topic present today. Rohner's theory developed out of the legacy of the researches conducted in the United States of America on this topic.

Theorists and researchers exploring the topic of parenting clearly distinguish between parenting practices and parenting styles. Parenting practices are defined as a set of behaviours adopted by parents in order to shape the child's behaviour in certain direction. An example of this could be taking the children to mosque on prayer time in order familiarize them with the religious practices or to going to parties with children in order to observe how they behave with their friends (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Aquilino and Supple (2011) report in a paper about the long term effects of parenting practices on young adults that, a parental control that is perceived coercive by adolescent children is linked with low level of wellbeing and substance use in young adulthood.

Huppert, *et al.*, (2010) reported that both the positive and the negative effects of parenting persist in mid-adulthood. Parenting practices have long term implications for the child and adult personality and serves as an important for the psychological wellbeing also.

Some theories have contributed a lot the scientific understanding of parental acceptance-rejection. One of the important works in this context is of Rollins and Thomas (1979). They studied parental supportive behaviour by utilizing a variety of measures and research designs.

Baumrind's (1966) work also contributed a lot to the understanding of parental acceptance and rejection. Her work was related to parenting styles (discussed in detail under the heading of parenting).

Another important series of research in the context of parental acceptance rejection by Downey and his colleagues (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Khouri, & Feldman, 1997; Feldman & Downey, 1994) explored rejection sensitivity. One of the findings of these researches is that the children who face rejection by their parents are more sensitive towards being rejected by others.

All of the above mentioned researches provided some answers to the important questions related to parenting but they are very much culturally bound. All of these researches were conducted in USA mainly on white Americans.

The findings of these researches were utilized in other parts of the world but need for culturally fair understanding of was needed. The researches done in the guidance of Rohner attempted to know the phenomena of parental acceptance-rejection in different nations. Almost 400 studies were conducted in 60 countries on the PAR Theory (Rohner, 2004).

Parental acceptance and rejection

The concept of acceptance is a composite of some concepts. Warmth is one of the key concepts that form the feeling of acceptance in a person. The word 'warmth', if translated literally refers to a state of being warm in temperature (Merriam-Webster, 2013). However, this 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). 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).

Rohner summed up his theoretical findings as what he termed Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory or PAR-theory (Rohner, 2005). This theory considers maternal acceptance as comprising of maternal warmth or affection that can be manifested in verbal, physical or symbolic forms.

In the PAR theory, acceptance is the composite of the love, affection, care concern nurturance and warmth that is felt and expressed by parents towards their children. It is expressed in two forms that are physical and verbal. The physical expression may include kissing, smiling, hugging, caressing, approving glances, fondling and other such signs of support and approval. Verbal acceptance may be manifested in the forms of saying good things about the child, telling stories, singing songs for little children, praising, complementing etc. (Rohner, 2005).

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A number of studies (Patterson, Cohn & Kao, 1989; Imam, 2004; Kim, 2008) on quality of mother child relationship suggest that the children, who receive low level of warmth by their mothers and are poorly adjusted as adolescents, are rejected by their peers, have more behavioural problems and are less competent than other children.

In context of present research and the PAR-Theory Framework the word Warmth is a feeling in emotional terms. Perceived Maternal Warmth refers to the feeling of mother's being warm in an emotional context. It can be manifested in verbal, physical or symbolic forms. Maternal warmth can also be defined as the emotional experience of love in the forms of concern, nurturance, of mother for the child (Rohner, 2005).

Mother's warmth in a verbal sense refers to the positive things uttered by mother for the child. These may include telling stories or singing songs for young children, saying good things about the child, praising, complementing etc. (Rohner, 2005).

Mother's warmth in a physical sense refers to physical contacts as an expression of warmth. This may include hugging the child, kissing the child, touching the child in any way to show love or support (Rohner, 2005) i.e. it is the expression of love in behavioural form and that the child experiences.

Mother's warmth in a symbolic sense refers to the expression of warmth by mother in ways that are symbolically associated with warmth in certain culture (Rohner, 2005). For instance breast feeding may be considered just a way of fulfilling the child's need of the child while in some eastern culture it may also be valued symbolically as an expression of mother's love.

A study on quality of mother child relationship by Patterson et al (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 presented 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.

According to Darling and Stenberg (1993), the standard strategy used by parents for child rearing is called parenting style. It is the emotional climate in which the parents raise their children.

Parenting styles

There are a number of theories exploring and explain the merits and demerits of certain parenting styles. Some theorists attempted to categorize the parenting styles in various types based on certain predefined criteria.

One of such comprehensive attempts was made by Baumrind (1966). The prime notion proposed by her is of "instrumental competence". According to her it is the ability to manipulate the environment to attain certain goals. She couples the development of

instrumental competence in children with the behaviour adopted by parents towards their children i.e. certain styles by parents are more conducive for the development of the instrumental competence while others may serve as a hurdle in its development.

Her theory primarily categorized parenting into three types i.e. Authoritative, Authoritarian and Permissive parenting style. Her theory was extended by Maccoby and Martin in 1983. The extension in the theoretical framework can be seen in the following table;

Maccoby and Martin's (1983) and Baumrind's (1966) Parenting Styles

	Demanding	Undemanding
Responsive	Authoritative/Propagative: Parents are firm in rules and responsive of the demands of the children.	Indulgent (permissive): parents do not have rules or does not implement them, but are responsive to the demands of the children.
Unresponsive	Authoritarian/totalitarian: Parents have strict rules but have no consideration of the demands of children.	Neglectful: parents do not have any rules and are not concerned with the welfare of their children

The concept of Authoritative parenting is very important in Baumrind (1966) theory. The word authoritative is derived from the word authority. One of its meanings is of being clearly accurate or knowledgeable (Merriam-Webster, 2013). According to Baumrind (1966) the parent with authoritative style of parenting tries to direct the activities of child but in a problem focused and rational manner.

The verbal give and take is encouraged by such parent. The parent tries to convince the child with the rationale behind the policies. Disciplined conformity and self-will are valued by such parents. Parent does enforce his or her perspective as an adult but has recognition of child's interests. The authoritative parent asserts the child's present character, but also sets standard for future conduct. The parent uses power and reason and shapes the behaviour of the child (Baumrind, 1966). According to Maccoby (1992) authoritative parenting styles is helpful in creating an environment that makes children successful, happy and capable. Baumrind suggests that this parenting style is most conducive for the development of instrumental competence in children.

The concept of Authoritarian parenting is also central in Baumrind (1966) theory. The word authoritative is also derived from the word authority but with a slight difference in meaning. The word authoritarian is defined as of, relating to, or favouring blind submission to authority (Merriam-Webster, 2013). According to Baumrind, the parent with authoritarian parenting style tries to evaluate, control and shape the attitudes and behaviours of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct (religious or

otherwise). Obedience by the child is valued. Forceful and punitive measures are applied in order to reduce the will of child. Such parents believe in restricting the authority of the child. Household responsibilities are assigned to the child in order to inculcate respect for work in the child. Verbal give and take is not encouraged in such households (Baumrind, 1967). Cherry (2013) writes in an insightful article on authoritarian parenting style that the children of authoritarian parents usually relate obedience and success with love and they usually suffer from low self-esteem. According to her, such children are aggressive outside their home and have difficulty in social situations as they tend to be fearful and shy. This style of parenting makes children proficient and obedient, but they are low in terms of self-esteem, social competence and happiness. Such parenting environment is like living in a dictatorship.

Maccoby and Martin (1983) studied adolescents of ages 14 to 18 years in four areas: problem behaviour, internalized distress, psychosocial development and school achievement. It was found that those with neglectful parents scored the lowest on these tests.

According to Cherry (2013) the children with parents with uninvolved parenting styles tend to be at the lowest rank throughout all life domains and they lack self-control have low self-esteem and are less competent.

Methodology

To study the correlation between mother's warmth and environmental mastery, among university students, this study utilized a quantitative route.

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 sample belonged to middle and upper middle socio economic strata and were unemployed (fulltime students).

Procedure

University of Karachi and Iqra University (Karachi) were selected for data collection. These reputed universities were contacted for consent. 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. The participants were given the questionnaires and asked to answer the statements according to relevant scales. It was made sure that all the participants pass through the same procedure of testing.

Measures

Demographic data sheet

This included items for getting information about participants' gender, age, date of birth, birth order, educational level, occupation, socio economic status, residential area and marital status. A special column was designed to record if the parents of the respondent are alive or not.

Environmental mastery subscale from Psychological Wellbeing Scales (Ryff, 1995)

Individuals respond to various statements and indicate on a 6-point Likert scale how true each statement is for them. Author reports temporal stability and strong reliability and validity of the scale (Ryff, 1995).

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. Studies suggest strong theoretical background and reliability and validity for this scale.

Data Analysis

The questioners filled by the participants were scored. The scored data of all the participants (N=200) were tabulated in excel sheet. For the calculation of the predictive relationships for the given constructs (through the Pearson Product Moment Correlation to test the hypothesis) and descriptive statistics (i.e. measure of central tendencies, percentages etc) statistical package for social sciences SPSS (12.0) software was used.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were approached through proper channel i.e. concerned departments were approached and students were approached after their consent. Students were asked for consent for the participation in this research. 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

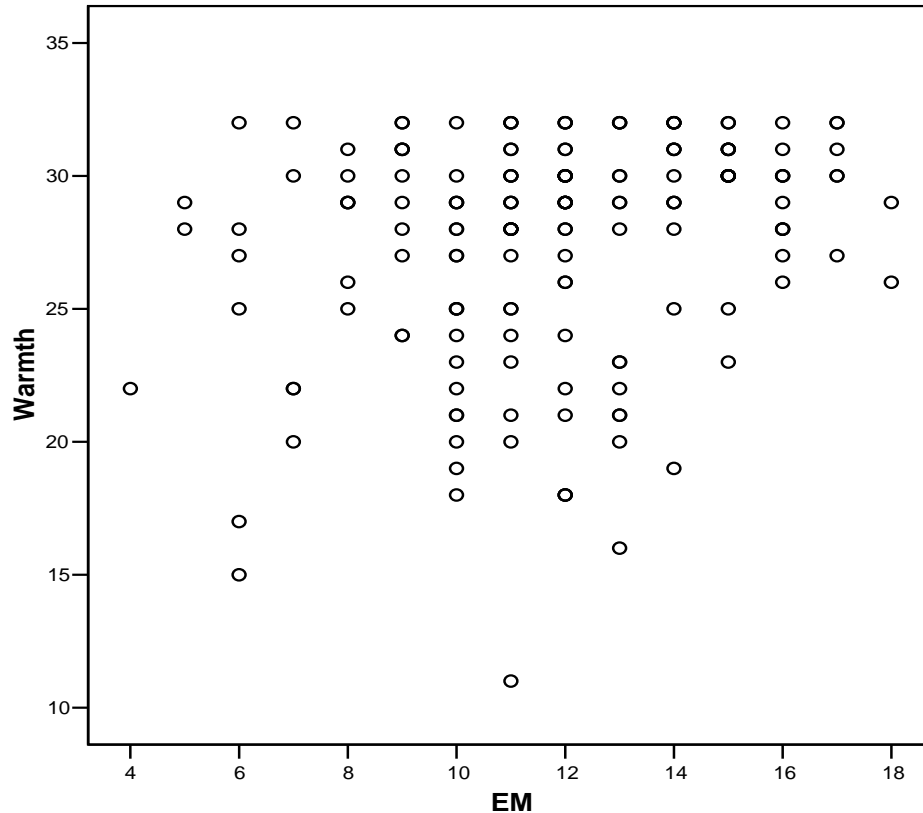
Correlation between Perceived Mother's Warmth and Environmental Mastery

N=200

	Perceived Mother's Warmth	Sig.
Environmental Mastery	.180*	.011

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 1 indicates that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Perceived Mother's Warmth and Environmental Mastery for the given sample is 0.180. The value is significant at 0.01 level i.e. there is a positive relationship between these two variables.

Scatter plot between perceived mother's warmth and Environmental Mastery**Discussion**

This study was an attempt to discover the positive correlation of perceived mother's warmth and environmental mastery. In accordance with the proposed assumption, a correlation was found between these variables ($r = 0.180$, $p < 0.05$) i.e. the hypothesis is proved.

Environmental mastery is the level of feeling of competence in handling the environment, the ability to do complex tasks, and making the most of the available opportunities (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The concept of environmental mastery is similar to concept of "instrumental competence" (Baumrind, 1966) that is, the ability of a person to manipulate the environment to attain certain goals.

As the definition suggests, it is a part of the wellbeing that is related to the practical aspect of life and mother's warmth has been found related to it. During various stages of child development a child undergoes physical growth and maturation and his intelligence development takes place. If he receives psychologically conducive environment he/she becomes more able to explore it.

The child who receives mother's warmth more becomes more secure (Rohner, 2005) and in turn is able to face the environment more and feels less anxious. This experience of wellness during childhood is essential for a secure pattern in the later stages.

Environmental mastery gives a person the skills that make him successful in a number of aspects in life. It is very much related to the professional and educational life. So it can be asserted through the results that children who receive mother's warmth are able to master their environment better and become more successful in their professional and academic life. A slightly different but theoretically consistent research finding (Munaf & Hussain, 2011) suggests that perceived father's acceptance is related to academic achievement in university students.

The early childhood experiences and their relation to environmental mastery have been investigated in few studies (i.e. Cogner, Williams, Little, Masyn, & Shebloski, 2009) but this result is a new addition to the prevailing research. Environmental mastery is also related to self-esteem and a study (Cox, 2003) show that warmth in the relationship between the parent and child is related to higher level self-esteem also.

In the context of parenting styles (Baumrind, 1966), current finding suggest that perceived mother's warmth increases the "instrumental competence". While the actual theory suggests that a parenting style that is both demanding and responsive can inculcate instrumental competence.

According to Baumrind such parenting style is authoritative. This point can be further investigated in future research that what is the nature and amount of mother's warmth in various parenting styles.

Conclusion

This research suggests that perceived mother's warmth (i.e. the perception of the warmth direction of the mother child relationship) and environmental mastery (i.e. the level of feeling of competence in handling the environment, the ability to do complex tasks, and making the most of the available opportunities) are correlated (i.e. presence of perceived mother's warmth will suggest the presence of environmental mastery and vice versa).

Limitations of the study and avenues for future research

Current research investigated the correlates of the phenomenon of mother's warmth. A correlational study it only indicates of co-occurrence of two variables. Secondly the phenomenon of mother's warmth was investigated in retrospective manner.

As this study was conducted on a sample of a specific age group its findings cannot be generalized to other age groups.

Only student population was taken as sample of this study and students are (mostly) still dependent on their parents and are not taking their part in the economic activity, a better study can be designed by taking professionals instead of students and investigating these variables.

Correlational studies does not indicate cause and effect relationship between variables and their might be certain mediatory factors also, therefore future investigator may utilize other methodologies to investigate this phenomenon that might shed more light on cause and effect relationship of these variables.

A qualitative investigation might be more appropriate for the investigation of this phenomenon.

Future researcher can design longitudinal studies that record the mother's warmth through some other methodology (for example, observation etc.) to explore it and see the development of wellbeing in latter stages. The phenomena can be explored in children also. And different attachment could be studied in conjunction with mother's warmth.

Future researches can see the correlations of Father's acceptance rejection with environmental mastery.

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