

A WARM RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHER IN CHILDHOOD AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD: A RELATIONAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to explore the association between mother's warmth and psychological well-being. For this study it was assumed that perceived mother's warmth would be positively correlated with psychological well-being and its six sub-constructs (i.e. positive relations with others, environmental mastery, purpose in life, personal growth, autonomy and self-acceptance). A random sample of 200 students (100 male, 100 female), of ages 20-25 year, belonging to educational institutions participated in this study. With participants' consent demographic information was recorded and following questionnaires were filled; (1) Perceived Maternal Warmth Sub-scale of Adult PAQR/CONTROL: Mother (short form) (Rohner, 2004), (2) Psychological Well-being Scales (Ryff, 1995). Results reveal that only two hypotheses were proved. Perceived mother's warmth is positively correlated to environmental mastery and positive relationship with others. Results indicate that perceived mother's warmth is not a predictor of autonomy, purpose in life, self-acceptance, personal growth and overall psychological well-being.

Keywords: mother's warmth; psychological well-being; mother-child relationship.

INTRODUCTION

According to Winkler (2000) mother-child bond is developed at the prenatal stage of development. Even after the birth, during neonatal, infancy, babyhood to adolescence, the offspring is reliant on the mother to varying degrees. Continuous nurture and care helps in child development. According to Martinez (2013) the baby is capable of identifying the voice of the mother and her face and recognize these features at a young age.

Rohner (2004) notes that more than 1,700 studies are available on Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PAR theory). The understanding of parenting today is a result of the contribution of many theorists and behaviour scientists. Rohner's PAR theory developed out of the legacy of the research on the topic of parenting conducted in the United States. Another important name in this regard is Baumrind (1966). Her work helped a great deal to the understanding of child rearing. She conducted studies on parenting styles.

Maternal acceptance

The word acceptance is used for something in the sense of being received as satisfactory, valid or appropriate. For the lexicon of Psychology, it means the acknowledgement of the truth without changing or distorting it. While it is an essential idea of Judo-Christian civilization, one interpretation of the term "Islam" is also "acceptance" (McDowell & Stewart, 1983).

According to the PAR theory, it is considered the sum of a parent's affection, warmth, love, nurturance, concern and care for their offspring. Acceptance is expressed in two ways i.e. verbal and physical. Verbal form may be shown by telling stories, praising, saying decent things, and singing for them, accompanying them etc. The physical form of acceptance includes various behaviours like smiling, kissing, touching, hugging, fondling, positive glances etc. (Rohner, 2005).

Warmth is considered an essential sub construct of maternal acceptance. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (2022) it refers to the physical state of being warm. But more often used in terms of feeling. The following write-up also uses this term for feeling.

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A study suggests that children who receive lower degree of maternal warmth are less competent and develop more behavioural problems as compared to their age peers who receive it more (Patterson, Cohn, & Kao, 1989).

Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being came into focus as a movement to make life healthier, happier and satisfying. Some theorists consider it as a unitary construct while others have seen it as a construct that has multiple dimensions.

Ryff (1995) suggests that psychological well-being is composite of 6 aspects: 1. Positive relations with others, 2. Self-acceptance, 3. Personal growth, 4. Purpose in life, 5. Environmental mastery and 6. Autonomy.

The above mentioned model with multi-dimensions is found correct in many researches (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). It is also called “eudemonic well-being” as it is full of purpose in nature.

This study aims to know the predictive association of perceived maternal warmth (PMW) with the psychological well-being of young adults. It seeks to know the correlations of the six aspects of psychological wellbeing with the PMW assuming a positive correlation for all aspects of it.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to know the predictive relationship of the PMW with psychological well-being and also with its 6 sub domains: autonomy, purpose in life, self-acceptance, positive relationship with others, environmental mastery and personal growth. A quantitative route of research was utilized. **Sampling:** The sample comprised 200 (100 female and 100 male) participants. Their ages were between 20 to 25 years and they were studying in the University of Karachi and Iqra University, Karachi (Pakistan). For this research the subjects were recruited randomly from the undergrad student population. They belonged to middle or upper-middle socioeconomic classes and were full time students (i.e. unemployed.)

Procedure: The data was collected in Karachi from both public and private sector universities. The institutions were contacted through proper channels and after getting consent, lists of students were obtained so the random sampling might be done. Testing sessions were conducted in classrooms. The students who gave consent for the research were tested. The subjects filled the questionnaires in the presence of the researcher.

Measures: Demographic sheet

Included items to record the subject’s gender, age, birth order, level of education, socio-economic status, marital status and residential area. An item asked if the parents of the subject are alive.

Measure of psychological well-being developed by Ryff (1995)

The scale measures six dimensions i.e. self-acceptance, personal growth, autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others and purpose in life. Respondents give their answers on a 6-point rating scale. The 18-items brief version was utilized for current research. A study by Ryff (1995) suggests temporal stability of the scale. Strong validity and reliability are also reported. It is a widely used measure.

PMW Sub-scale from Adult PAQR/CONTROL developed by Rohner (2004)

This measure explores the respondent's perception of the parenting he/she received as a child. The subject recollects the experiences of age 7 to 12 years. Several facets of maternal acceptance/rejection and degree of control are measured. This 29 items measure has a mother's warmth sub-scale (that explores symbolic, verbal and physical warmth). This study used the items of the PMW subscale. Previous research has suggested good reliability and validity for this scale.

Data Analysis: Pearson product moment correlation was calculated for each of the given constructs with maternal warmth. Descriptive statistics, mean, median, mode etc. were also calculated.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly followed in this research as the researcher sought consent from all the participants. The institutions also gave consent for the research. Participants were aware that they can leave this research if they feel uncomfortable. Strict standards of confidentiality were applied as participants’ details were only used for research purposes.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 Correlation between PMW and Psychological Well-being and its dimensions

	PMW	Sig.
Psychological Well-being	.032	.648
Autonomy	-.034	.636
Environmental Mastery	.180*	.011
Personal Growth	.017	.816
Positive Relationship with Others	.167**	.031
Purpose in Life	-.043	.542
Self-Acceptance	-.068	.338

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

DISCUSSION

This research was an investigation into the association of the perception of mother's warmth with vital facets of mental life i.e. psychological well-being and its various aspects. It was assumed that there will be a positive correlation between the perception of maternal warmth and psychological wellbeing and its 6 aspects. The results paint a very different picture from the assumptions of the researcher. The prime assumption of current study i.e. a positive correlation between the PMW and overall psychological well-being was negated in this research. In contrast to what was assumed, the results are indicative of insignificant correlation ($r = 0.032$, $p > 0.05$). This means the PMW is not a predictor of psychological well-being in the given sample i.e. a person who does not consider his/her relationship with the mother in childhood as warm may also have a good amount of psychological well-being. It should be taken into consideration that psychological well-being is a multifaceted construct and its two dimensions were found correlated with the PMW. Those aspects will be discussed in the relevant places in this write-up. Also contrary to what was assumed, feelings of autonomy and the PMW are also not correlated. Remarkably, a negative (yet insignificant) relation was found ($r = -0.034$, $p > 0.05$). It indicates that for some in this sample PMW predicts a lack of autonomy.

Another assumption of this research was a correlation between the PMW and personal growth. In contrast to what was assumed, insignificant correlation was found ($r = 0.017$, $p > 0.05$). It indicates that the potential for growth as a person is independent of perceived warmth in the relationship with mother. Similarly, the assumption that there will be a correlation between the PMW and purpose in life was not proven ($r = -0.043$, $p > 0.05$). It indicates that purpose in life is independent of the amount of maternal warmth received in childhood. Similarly the correlation between the PMW and self-acceptance was not significant. Interestingly, there was an insignificant negative relation ($r = -0.068$, $p > 0.05$). It means for some participants, more of the PMW meant less self-acceptance.

As hypothesized, a strong positive relation ($r = 0.180$, $p < 0.05$) between the PMW and environmental mastery was found. Ryff and Keyes (1995) define environmental mastery as the degree of feeling of being able to manage the environment, being able to perform complex tasks and make the most of the prospects that are available. This is very much like "Instrumental Competence" – a concept proposed by Baumrind (1966). Instrumental Competence refers to "a person's ability to manipulate the environment to reach certain aims." Above finding indicates that the person who has more of the PMW becomes more secure (Rohner, 2005) and as a result of this sense of security he/she faces the surroundings competently and is less nervous. Well-being in childhood is vital for a psychological sense of security in later life. It gives an individual the skills that make him successful. Environmental mastery is connected to educational and professional spheres of life. These results indicate that the offspring who receive the PMW are better in terms of mastering their environments and therefore they become more successful in academic and professional lives. In consonance with the above finding, Munaf and Hussain (2011) suggest perception of parental acceptance is associated with achievement in academics.

A positive correlation was assumed between the PMW and a positive relationship with others. As hypothesized, a significant correlation was found among these variables ($r = 0.167$, $p < 0.05$). This finding is supported by research (Rettner, 2010) that suggests that the people that have better relationships with their partner had experienced more warmth as a child.

Analysing above findings, we can summarize that correlations were found between only two aspects of psychological wellbeing with the PMW: positive relations with others and environmental mastery. The rest of the assumptions were not proved in this research. It can be concluded that a higher degree of the PMW suggests greater ability of environmental mastery i.e. the PMW predicts the ability of a person to get maximum out of the available prospects and to gain the most from the environment. This research also suggests that a higher level of the PMW helps people form more positive relationships with others. The PMW predicts positive relationships so it can be said that if a person has a lot of negative relationships this may be an indication of lesser or lack of the PMW in childhood.

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