

Fathers parenting role: self esteem, parenting styles and parental self-efficacy

M. Pires*, R. Brites*, J. Hipólito*, & O. Nunes*

* CIP-Psychology Research Center - Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the relation between fathers parenting styles (PS), self-esteem (SE) and parental self-efficacy (PSE). Research points out the complex potential relations between SE and PSE. Although PSE has been studied in association to PS, there's a research gap concerning the influence of fathers' SE in this process. In a cross-sectional study a questionnaire comprising personal data, PS, SE and PSE was completed by 157 men (age: $M=38.41$, $SD=6.03$) of pre-school/school age children. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses and structural equation models (SEM) were performed. Like other studies, authoritative PS is associated to positive outcomes, explaining 25% of PSE variance, in opposition to permissiveness, associated to a negative sense of PSE. Education level and SE emerge as significant predictors for fathers PS exerting indirect effects on PSE. Father's higher levels of SE and education are important individual variables to fathers-child relation with implications on family affective climate and health.

INTRODUCTION

Parenting styles (PS) defined as different expectations regarding child-rearing that sets out family emotional climate, are understood in a contextual parenting model integrating individual and external variables (Baumrind, 1971; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Belsky, Crnic & Gable, 1995). Lower socioeconomic status, educational level and SE have been associated to negative outcomes in children, authoritarian and permissive-negligent PS and harsh parenting practices. Thus authoritative and permissive-indulgent PS with a well balanced responsiveness and control towards child-rearing are associated with a better family climate promoting child development (Wade, 2004).

Aunola, Nurmi, Onatsu-Arivilommi and Pulkkinen (1999) and Pires (2010,2011), found mothers to be more authoritative and fathers more authoritarian. Higher educational levels and SE partially explain authoritative; hence these are relevant individual variables. Although few researches include fathers, over the past decades, men are more involved in everyday family life and are more active in their parenting role making this a research field with an expanding interest for family studies (Murdock, 2012; Seward & Richter, 2008). Hofferth, Pleck, Goldscheider, Curtin and Hrapczynski (2013) found fathering attitudes such as warmth and control to contribute for family structure, increased father involvement and behavioral changes in two parents household. Nicholson, Howard and Borkowski (2008) also highlight the value of growing with a positive father presence, helping to set out boy's metaparenting and his future role as a father.

Like PS, parenting self-efficacy (PSE) regarding parents' beliefs in their ability to educate and nurture their children in a positive way (Scheel & Rieckman, 1998), has been linked to positive behavioral outcomes (Thomas, Feeley & Grier, 2009). For fathers, supportive/engaged parenting behaviors contribute to PSE (Murdock, 2012). Parents with a high PSE tend to be more secure in their parenting role, more optimistic, authoritative and consistent in parent-child interactions (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Aunola et al., 1999; Scheel & Rieckman, 1998).

OBJECTIVES

The aim of this exploratory, cross-sectional within subjects study, is to explore the relation between fathers PS, SE and PSE. To develop a fathers parenting model including individual variables and highlight the relevance of studying fathers perceptions in the scope of family functioning.

METHODS

Participants

A convenience sample of 157 fathers from 22-65 years old ($M= 38.41$, $SD= 6.03$), mostly married or cohabiting 77.4% ($n= 120$) with 1 to 4 children ($M= 1.75$, $SD= 0.75$). 40.4% has a higher education level (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Marital status demographics

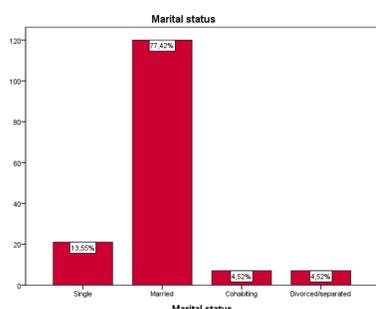
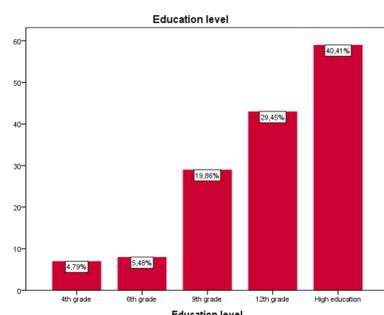


Figure 1. Educational level demographics



Measures

Parental Self-efficacy Scale (Brites, Martins & Nunes, 2011): self-reported 44 item scale which assess parents' perception of their overall parenting skills and performance (sample $\alpha=.74$).

S.E.R.T.H.UAL – Self-esteem Scale (Nunes, et al., 2006) 60 item self-reported measure of self-esteem (sample $\alpha=.86$).

PAQ-P (Parental Authority Questionnaire for Parents) (Pires, 2010, 2011): Portuguese validation and parents' report adaptation of PAQ. A 30 item self-report scale with 3 scores for each PS (permissive, authoritative and authoritarian) (sample's $\alpha=.64$; $\alpha=.83$; $\alpha=.74$).

RESULTS

Hierarchical multiple regression was conducted excluding authoritarian PS (low correlation values) and family variables such as the number of children, child's age and daily father-child interaction time (*ns* correlations). A significant model emerged with permissive ($X=24.07$, $SD=5.23$) and authoritative ($X=40.04$, $SD=5.37$) PSs as PSE ($X=4.01$, $SD=1.87$) predictors variables (explaining 35.6% of variance) (Table 1).

Table 1.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression With Authoritative and Permissive PS Predicting PSE Dependent Variable

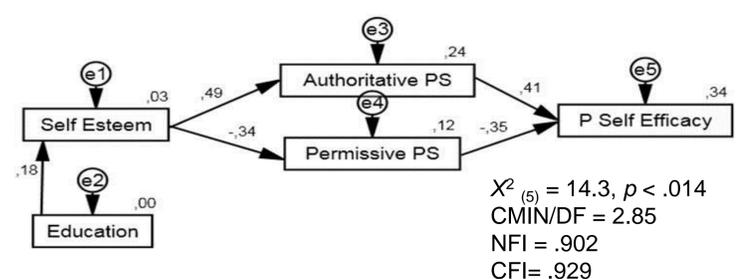
	Model	B	SE	Beta	t	R ²	AdjR ²	ΔR ²
1	Authoritative	.174	.025	.497	6.949***	.247	.242	
	Permissive	-.124	.025	-.343	-4.959***	.356	.347	.109

$F_{(2, 146)} = 40.313^{***}$

*** $p < .001$

SEM were conducted using SE, PS to test their influence on PSE. Fit indices suggested that the model fit the data moderately (CMIN/DF=6.80; CFI=.91), however, parameter estimates implies model improvement to data adjustment. The second model including education level (EL) presented a better fit, inferring the effect of schooling on self-evaluation. (Figure 3)

Figure 3. SEM relating SE, EL and PS with PSE



Findings shows that authoritative accounts for higher PSE, while permissiveness has the opposite effect. SEM was used to include individual resources, namely SE and EL. EL has a small effect on SE and no effect on PS, nonetheless it underlies the importance of cultural level and information as an empowerment personal resource.

CONCLUSION

Findings are consistent with previous research indicating parenting as a complex dynamic model influenced by several individual variables (internal or external resources). Fathers with higher education tend to have a good self-esteem, implying that personal satisfaction and self-realization may play a part in a more balanced authoritative parenting. Leading to an increased self-efficacy in their parenting role. Permissiveness and authoritative have opposite effects on self-efficacy feelings, in which responsiveness and controlled child-rearing results on increased parenting fulfillment. Constrains concerning self-report measures with possible desirability effect and cross-sectional design should be addressed in future research. Nevertheless, present results contribute to understanding fathers parenting role enhancing the need to include fathers report in family and development studies.

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