

Paternal Control Practices and Sociometric Status of 6-8 Years Old Children

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INTRODUCTION

Studies linking parent child interaction have progressed, until recently. Some studies have sought to examine parenting style differences of mothers and fathers that are related to children's popularity ratings and peer interaction patterns. Unfortunately, little attention has been given to the role of fathers in the development of children's social skills with peers. There is evidence that fathers, in comparison to mothers, play a significantly less active role in their children's play with peers (Ladd and Golter, 1988). Although the role of fathers may be different from those of mothers, there is no reason to expect that their roles are any less significant. Power and Parke (1982) found consistent stylistic differences in mother-child versus father-child interaction with mothers being more verbal and fathers being more physical in their interchanges. Bhavnagri and Parke (1991) found that fathers were as competent and used similar strategies as mothers when supervising their children's play. Though, in peer group, a child has the chance to play a variety of roles that are not readily available to him or her in interaction with adults. But children learn specific social skills in their early interactions with parents, which later generalize to subsequent interactions with peers. Through the process of modelling, reinforcement and coaching, children acquire their parents' interactive behaviours that then shape the nature of their peer relations.

So the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of paternal control practices with the sociometric status of 6-8 years old children.

METHOD

Subjects: The study was conducted in two states: Himachal Pradesh (Palampur) and Haryana (Hisar). Two schools from Palampur and two schools from Hisar were selected. From these schools, one was providing education to children of upper-middle-class and high-class families-subsequently termed as high-income school for

the present study, and the other providing education to children of lower-class families. The fathers of these children were also interviewed to gain information regarding their control practices. Hence 120 children (60 from each state) and their fathers constituted the sample for this study.

Procedure: The sociometric status of children, which is referred to as the measure of interpersonal attraction among the members of a specified group, was assessed with the help of rating scale and nomination method. Children's scores were first calculated for same sex peer ratings and nominations and then for mixed group assessment. Average rating score, positive nomination score, negative nomination score and social preference score were computed for same gender and mixed group peers.

To examine paternal control practices. Greenberger's scale (1988) was modified and adapted. The items on parental control scale were divided into three sub-scales: firm, harsh and lax control. Fathers were requested to rate their responses on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Composite scores were obtained for firm, harsh and lax control.

RESULTS

One-tailed Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between sociometric scores and paternal control scores. Separate analyses were run for high-income and low-income schools. Magnitude of correlations ranged from low to moderate.

As presented in table 1, paternal firm control was significantly and positively correlated with average rating score and positive nominations by same gender and mixed group peers respectively in Hisar sample; and for social preference by same gender and mixed group peers in Palampur sample. Significant negative correlations existed for paternal harsh control and social preference by same gender and mixed group peers in Hisar sample. For paternal harsh control, significant positive correlations were observed for negative

Table 1: Correlations between paternal control and sociometric scores of high-income school children

Sociometric scores	Locale	Paternal Control		
		Firm	Harsh	Lax
SGP Rating Average	Palampur	.11	-.23	-.53*
	Hisar	.33*	-.18*	-.39*
MGP Rating Average	Palampur	.10	-.30	-.50*
	Hisar	.17	-.28	-.37*
SGP Positive Nomination	Palampur	.15	-.16	-.21
	Hisar	.24	-.15	-.18
MGP Positive Nomination	Palampur	.11	-.16	-.10
	Hisar	.34*	-.10	-.14
SGP Negative Nomination	Palampur	-.17	.42*	.52*
	Hisar	-.27	.26	.32*
MGP Negative Nomination	Palampur	-.10	.46*	.52*
	Hisar	-.29	.22	.27
SGP Social Preference	Palampur	.35*	-.16	-.44*
	Hisar	.16	-.47*	-.29
MGP Social Preference	Palampur	.40*	-.29	-.58*
	Hisar	.30	-.34*	-.35*

Note : Significant at * $p < .05$. SGP = Same Gender Peers; MGP = Mixed Gender Peers.

nominations by same gender peers and mixed group peers in Palampur sample.

Regarding paternal lax control, significant negative correlations were observed for rating average by same gender and mixed group peers in Palampur and Hisar sample; and for social preference by same gender peers in Palampur sample, by mixed group peers in Palampur and Hisar sample. Significant positive correlations were observed for negative nominations by same gender peers in Palampur and Hisar sample; and by mixed group peers in Palampur sample.

As shown in table 2, similar results were obtained for paternal control practices and sociometric scores of low-income school children. Regarding fathers' firm control in Palampur sample, significant positive correlations were observed for rating average, positive nominations and social preference by same gender and mixed gender peers. A negative correlation was observed for negative nominations by mixed group peers. In Hisar sample, although not significant, a positive trend was observed for rating average, positive nominations and social preference; and a negative trend was observed for negative nominations by same gender and mixed gender peers.

Regarding paternal harsh control, significant negative correlations existed for rating average by same gender peers in Palampur and Hisar

Table 2: Correlations between paternal control and sociometric scores of low-income school children

Sociometric scores	Locale	Paternal Control		
		Firm	Harsh	Lax
SGP Rating Average	Palampur	.32*	-.32*	-.45*
	Hisar	.31*	-.54*	-.48*
MGP Rating Average	Palampur	.52*	-.19	-.18
	Hisar	.14	-.42*	-.49*
SGP Positive Nomination	Palampur	.51*	-.38*	-.37*
	Hisar	.22	-.51*	-.57*
MGP Positive Nomination	Palampur	.68*	-.40*	-.34*
	Hisar	.26	-.39*	-.44*
SGP Negative Nomination	Palampur	-.26	.12	.16
	Hisar	-.15	.12	.12
MGP Negative Nomination	Palampur	-.39*	.36*	.15
	Hisar	-.20	.33*	.15
SGP Social Preference	Palampur	.38*	-.41*	-.16
	Hisar	.28	-.32*	-.12
MGP Social Preference	Palampur	.61*	-.69*	-.33*
	Hisar	.28	-.41*	-.52*

Note : Significant at * $p < .05$. SGP = Same Gender Peers; MGP = Mixed Gender Peers.

sample and by mixed group peers in Hisar sample. Significant negative correlations were also observed for positive nominations and social preference by same gender as well as mixed gender peers in both the samples. Also significant positive correlations existed for negative nominations by mixed group peers in Palampur and Hisar sample.

Regarding fathers' lax control, significant negative correlations were observed for average rating by same gender peers, positive nominations by same gender and mixed gender peers, and for social preference by mixed group peers in both the study groups. Also significant negative correlations existed for rating average by mixed group peers in Hisar sample.

DISCUSSION

It is evident from these results that though much significant associations could not be observed between paternal control practices and sociometric scores of children, but then also, a trend could be observed for the same. It appears that fathers who were firm in control, tended to have children who received more positive ratings and positive nominations and less negative ratings and negative nominations. In other words they tended to be popular and accepted by their peers. On the other hand, fathers who were either harsh or lax in control were more likely to have children

who were either rejected or neglected by their peers. They received more negative ratings and negative nominations less positive ratings and positive nominations from same gender as well as mixed gender peers.

It is evident from these findings that the role of fathers is not any less significant than that of mothers in the development of social skills and social competence among children. Fathers can also be just as competent as mothers in guiding their children's behaviour. Several studies have shown strong connections between father-child relationship and popularity during preschool (Parke et al., 1989) and elementary school years (Patterson et al., 1990). MacDonald (1987) found that children who experienced coercive physical play with their fathers were more likely to be rejected by peers and to become out of control during play interactions. East (1991) reported that the withdrawn girls and aggressive boys perceived less support in their father-child relationship than did other children. Hart et al. (1992) indicated that children of more inductive mothers and fathers exhibited fewer disruptive playground behaviours. More systematic exploration of the differential patterns of influence of mothers and fathers are needed in understanding the role that parents might play in the development of children's peer relations.

KEY WORDS Socialisation. Social Status. Child. Social Skills

ABSTRACT The present study aimed to explore the relationship between paternal control practices and sociometric status of 6-8 years old children. Palampur (Himachal Pradesh) and Hisar (Haryana) were selected as locales for the study. From each city sixty children and their fathers participated. A questionnaire was

compiled to gain information from the fathers about their control practices. For sociometric assessment rating scale and nomination measures were used. The results obtained indicated that fathers who were firm in control, their children enjoyed a positive social status among their peers. On the other hand, fathers who were harsh in control had children who were likely to be rejected and had a negative status among their peers.

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