

Marital Stability as a Correlate of Parenting

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KEYWORDS Parenting Patterns. Marital Stability. Positive Dimensions. Negative Dimensions. Cultural Zones

ABSTRACT The present study was undertaken to assess the role of parenting in relation to marital stability of urban Punjabi parents. A sample of 300 families (300 fathers and 300 mothers) were randomly selected from Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana and Patiala cities of Punjab. 'Socio-Economic Status Scale', 'Multi-dimensional Parenting Scale' and 'The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire' Form A were used as quantitative measures. Results showed that marital stability of parents played a significant role in parenting patterns used by them. Marital stability is highly potential and pervasive in promotion of positive parenting patterns like love, democratic behaviour, encouragement, acceptance and independence among children. Whereas parents having low level of marital stability were unable to provide healthy atmosphere to their children.

INTRODUCTION

Family is a basic and universal institution. The survival of society depends upon the continued existence and functioning of the family. Parenting has been defined as a single minded, unconditional desire to provide a loving, caring home. It is the parents who exert the major influence on the development of the child from birth to maturity. It is from the parents that the child initially experiences the meaning of love. Parents provide a framework within which the child may find roots, continuity and a sense of belonging. Parenthood and parenting have existed since the beginning of social life. Both mothers and fathers have remained contributor to the development of their children. Father is seen as bridge by which the child reaches the outside world (Meertoo and Burnhardet 1975). While mother symbolizes with an emotional support, interpersonal sensitivity and help giver etc.

Congenial parenting correlates with good relationships between husband and wife. It is important to remember that parents have a relationship with each other as well as with their children. Parents serve as source of mutual emotional and physical support and comfort and such support is especially important in their roles as caretakers, positive parent-child relationships have been found when spouses are mutually supportive. Marriage relationship has important implications not only for the immediate marital satisfaction of the couple but also for the psychological development of their children. Marital stability happens to be an index of the nature

of mutual identification and sharing of responsibilities and commitments of the post marital period of husband and wife. Marital stability, as an index of continuity and perpetuation of nuclear relations of mutual dependency, trust, and friendship remains a measure of prediction of more or less happy marriage (Cattell 1970). Healthy marital relations have a system-orientation and a shared belief-system (Kaslow 1982). High marital stability shows low levels of anxiety and neuroticism and more security and self esteem (Osolsky 1985). Research reveals an association between marital disturbance and emotional disorders in children (Cummings et al. 1996). Marital discord leads to distress, depression and negative affectivity in the parents, which in turn affects their parenting style or interaction with their children (Sinha and Sharma 2001). A home environment that is characterized by quarreling, nagging and disagreement has deleterious effects on both parents and children. High conflict between parents is associated with negative feelings and behaviour directed towards their children and in turn with disruptions in social and cognitive competency and increased antisocial behaviour in children. Keeping this in view, present study was conducted to study the relationship of marital stability with the parenting patterns used by urban Punjabi parents.

METHODS

Sample: The data for the present study was collected from three cultural zones of Punjab state i.e. Majha, Doaba and Malwa. Four cities

namely Amritsar, Ludhiana, Patiala and Hoshiarpur were purposely selected from these three cultural zones. Urban families were again selected purposely from each city. Only those 300 families were retained which were from middle and upper middle socio-economic strata, were of Punjabi origin, where both husband and wife were alive and had at least one son and a daughter. The target sample included both husband and wife from each selected family making the total sample of 600 respondents (300 mothers and 300 fathers). Each selected subject was examined for marital stability and parenting patterns.

Procedures: "Socio-economic status scale" by Bharadwaj (2001) was used to assess the socio-economic status of respondents. "Multi-dimensional parenting scale" by Chauhan and Khokhar (1982) was used to measure parenting styles of parents. This test measures the two ends of the seven dichotomous dimensions namely hate v/s love, discouragement v/s encouragement, rejection v/s acceptance, dependence v/s independence, autocratism v/s democratism, submission v/s dominance and conservatism v/s progressivism representing negative and positive dimensions of parenting. Indian adaptation of Cattle's 'The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire' (16 P.F.) Form A by Kapoor (1970) was used to assess marital stability of parents. This test measures sixteen primary factors of personality in 187 statements. These primary factors include: Reserve v/s Outgoing, Less intelligent v/s More intelligent, Affected by feelings v/s Emotionally stable, Humble v/s Assertive, Sober v/s Happy-go-lucky, Expedient v/s Conscientious, Shy v/s Venture some, Tough minded v/s Tender minded, Trusting v/s Suspicious, Practical v/s Imaginative,

Forthright v/s Shrewd, Placid v/s Apprehensive, (Q1) Conservative v/s Experimenting, (Q2) Group-dependent v/s Self-sufficient, (Q3) undisciplined v/s controlled, (Q4) relaxed v/s tense. The raw scores were converted into standard scores after which marital stability scores were obtained with the help of the following formula:

Marital Stability = $0.26A + 0.24B + 0.50C - 0.43E + 0.16F + 0.05G + 0.51H + 0.11I - 0.08L + 0.18M - 0.19N - 0.10O + 0.27Q1 + 0.22Q2 - 0.01Q3 + 0.41Q4 + 7.28$. Calculated marital scores were divided into three categories viz. low, medium and high. Arithmetic mean, standard deviation and 'F' test methods were used to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 depicts comparative mean scores ($\pm$ SD) of positive dimensions of parenting across different levels of marital stability of parents. The statistical values for various positive dimensions of parenting across different levels (low, medium and high) of marital stability showed significant differences. All the three groups of marital stability level differed significantly ($p < 0.01$) from each other for all positive dimensions of parenting. It could easily be observed that the mean scores for all positive dimensions increased from low to medium and medium to high with increase in the level of marital stability from low to medium and medium to high. None of the positive dimension of parenting was found to be exception to this rule.

It could be concluded that parents with high level of marital stability were more loving, encouraging, accepting, progressive and democratic towards their children as compared to parents having medium and low levels of marital

Table 1: Comparative mean score ($\pm$ SD) of positive dimensions of parenting across different levels of marital stability of parents

Parenting dimensions	Marital Stability									F	Level of significance
	Low			Medium			High				
	Mean	Low	CV	Mean	Low	CV	Mean	Low	CV		
Love	52.066	7.864	15.10	53.003	7.851	14.81	55.050	7.964	14.47	11.942	P<0.01
Encouragement	52.910	7.127	13.47	53.304	6.851	12.85	55.063	6.944	12.61	8.657	P<0.01
Acceptance	47.767	8.635	18.08	49.482	8.060	16.29	51.588	8.144	15.79	16.265	P<0.01
Progressivism	46.093	8.655	18.78	49.247	7.558	15.41	51.269	8.441	16.46	31.504	P<0.01
Democratism	46.126	9.447	19.83	51.458	9.188	17.86	52.924	8.212	15.52	22.832	P<0.01
Independency	44.904	7.829	17.44	46.426	7.717	16.62	48.419	7.636	15.77	15.679	P<0.01
Dominance	50.518	7.053	13.96	48.411	7.697	15.90	48.272	8.161	16.91	8.916	P<0.01
Total	342.385	33.423	9.76	351.333	29.542	6.41	362.585	31.730	8.75	31.856	P<0.01

Table 2: Comparative mean score ($\pm$ SD) of negative dimensions of parenting across different levels of marital stability of parents

Parenting dimensions	Marital Stability									F	Level of significance
	Low			Medium			High				
	Mean	Low	CV	Mean	Low	CV	Mean	Low	CV		
Hate	52.864	11.146	21.08	50.883	9.024	17.74	50.000	9.765	19.53	6.906	P<0.01
Rejection	56.379	10.323	18.31	53.873	8.764	16.27	53.050	9.767	18.41	10.544	P<0.01
Autocratism	51.814	9.282	17.91	48.791	9.010	18.47	47.927	10.691	22.31	14.421	P<0.01
Discouragement	54.140	8.279	15.29	52.246	9.875	18.90	50.827	10.269	20.20	9.020	P<0.01
Submission	56.120	9.223	16.43	55.064	8.272	15.02	54.166	8.725	16.11	9.020	P<0.01
Conservatism	58.538	8.67	15.32	57.428	8.600	14.97	57.216	8.376	14.64	3.856	NS
Dependency	50.598	9.568	18.91	49.064	9.266	18.88	46.917	10.671	22.74	2.163	P<0.01
Total	380.452	47.579	12.51	367.348	42.053	11.45	360.103	49.538	13.76	10.933	P<0.01

stability. Mean scores also reflected that tendency of being independent was more in children of high maritally stable parents as compared to other levels. It was observed that parenting patterns adopted by high maritally stable parents were far better than their counterparts.

Table 2 shows comparative mean scores ($\pm$ SD) of negative dimensions of parenting across different levels of marital stability of parents. The statistical value for various negative dimensions of parenting across different levels (low, medium and high) of marital stability showed significant difference. All the three groups of marital stability level differed significantly ($P<0.01$) from each other for all dimensions of parenting except the dimension of "conservatism" ($P>0.05$). It could easily be observed that the mean scores of all negative dimensions decreased from high to medium and medium to low as the level of marital stability increased but in case of 'dependency' higher mean scores were found to be in low marital stability group followed by high level and than medium level.

Results clearly indicated that negative dimensions of parenting namely 'Hate', 'Rejection', 'Autocratism', 'Discouragement', 'Submission' and 'Dependency' were less prominent in the parenting of high maritally stable parents as compared to medium and low maritally stable parents. Parents having medium or low levels of marital stability were not so loving and had hating and rejecting tendencies towards their children.

Above findings clearly suggest that marital stability of parents play an important role in parenting patterns used by them on their children. Marital stability is highly potential and pervasive in promotion of positive parenting patterns. High marital stability in parents pro-

mote love, democratic, behaviour, encouragement, acceptance and independence (Mathur 1989) where as parents having low level of marital stability were unable to provide healthy atmosphere to their children and their children crave for love, feel neglected, used to be dependent and were submissive, autocratic and conservative. Children from the "happy calm" homes tend to be less negative than youngsters from the opposite type of home. The latter show more signs of emotional disturbance, such as jealousy, fear, grumbling, nervousness, sucking and tenseness (Mital 2006). Thus a satisfying marital relationship is often regarded as the cornerstone of good family functioning which directly or indirectly facilitates effective parenting, positive sibling relationship and the development of competent adaptive children.

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