



CORRELATES OF PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION AND FAMILY ADJUSTMENT

Mouneshwari R Kammar*

Professors, Dept of Human Development and Family studies, CCSc, UAS Dharwad *Corresponding Author

Prema Patil

Professors, Dept of Human Development and Family studies, CCSc, UAS Dharwad

Sunita Ilager

M Sc Scholar, Dept of Human Development and Family studies, CCSc, UAS Dharwad

ABSTRACT

With an objective to study the relation and the factors influencing parent child-interaction and family adjustment, the present study was conducted in Dharwad taluka with 50 children studying at laboratory nursery school of department of Human Development and Family Studies. Parent Child Interaction (PCI) scale developed by Meisles (1989) and Parenting and Family Adjustment Scale (PAFAS) developed by Sanders and Morawska (2010) were used for data collection. The data was analyzed using correlation, t-test and Chi-square. Results revealed a negative significant relationship between ordinal position and family adjustment indicating that the first born having less family adjustment. A positive and significant relationship between parent-child interaction and family adjustment indicating higher the parent child interaction better is the family adjustment. A negative significant difference was found between number of children and parent child interaction, family income and parent child interaction. A negative significant difference was found between number of children and parent child interaction, family income and parent child interaction. The results revealed that, a significant difference ($t = 2.40^*$) at 5 per cent level was observed in family adjustments between children having different ordinal positions. Further a significant difference was observed in family adjustment among children having parents with different educational levels.

KEYWORDS : Parent, Child, Interaction, Family, Adjustment

INTRODUCTION

The parent-child relationship is one of the most influential, important, and meaningful relationships in an individual's life. The communication between parents and children fuels their bond and functions to socialize children (i.e., gender, career and work, relationship values and skills, and health behaviours), provide social support, show affection, make sense of their life experiences, engage in conflict, manage private information, and create a family communication environment. Although research on parent-child communication is vast and thorough, the constant changes faced by families in the 21st century including more diverse family structures provides ample avenues for future research on this complex relationship. Changes in society such as advances in technology, the aging population, and differing parenting practices are also transforming the parent-child relationship. Because this relationship is a vital social resource for both parents and children throughout their lives, researchers will undoubtedly continue to seek to understand the complexities of this important family dyad.

The parent-child interactions provide the primary social learning context from infancy. A variety of social-cognitive and socio-emotional processes, such as emotion regulation and recognition, referencing, gaze following, gesturing, and communication, are first evident in parent-child interactions. For example, between the second and third month of life there are significant developments in parent-infant behavioural synchrony, turn taking, and reciprocity, all of which are precursors to a healthy attachment. In typically developing children between the ages of 3 and 6 years, however, there is a marked decrease in time spent in direct contact with caregivers and a concurrent increase in time spent with peers. As such, peer relationships play an increasingly prominent role in a child's social development during the school years. This trend continues throughout middle childhood as increased availability of social opportunities is coupled with increased social interest, social-cognitive maturation, and independence. Despite these contextual changes, parenting behaviours, specifically those related to supporting children's

changing developmental needs, continue to impact the child's burgeoning competence. While there are key parenting behaviors that support growth in social skill acquisition (i.e., warmth, sensitivity, and responsiveness), there are also those that interfere with, or hinder these developmental processes (i.e., parental negativity and over reactivity).

There is generally strong continuity of social competence during earlier developmental periods (from early childhood to middle childhood), yet studies of continuity from childhood to adolescence have yielded inconsistent findings (Obradović *et al.*, 2006). Longitudinal studies have shown that although attachment classification in infancy does not predict attachment beyond childhood, functioning during childhood is significantly related to functioning in adolescence, which predicts future functioning in young adulthood (Simpson *et al.*, 2007). Secure infants who are more socially competent in middle childhood have more secure friendships at age 16, and these individuals demonstrate greater emotional expression in their romantic relationships as young adults. Those who begin as secure are much more likely to experience high-quality relationships across development. Early attachment experiences are foundational and influence one's ability to form intimate and stable bonds over time. The parent-child attachment provides a framework within which the child forms expectations about the predictability of relationships. Those youth who have a secure attachment with their parents are likely to view peer interactions and relationships as similarly predictable and safe, providing a secure context for social exploration. Similarly, these early experiences influence later representations of romantic relationships, suggesting continuities between experiences with primary caregivers and the quality of later attachments (Roisman *et al.*, 2009). Thus the study was carried out with an objective to study the relation between the parent child interaction and family adjustment, and the factors influencing parent child interaction and family adjustment.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out on a purposive sample of 50

children studying at Laboratory Nursery School of Department of Human Development and Family Studies and their parent at Dharwad. Parent Child Interaction scale developed by Meisles (1989), which consists of 13 items with 3 point likert scale with score ranging from 0-26. Higher the score better is the parent child interaction.

Further, Parenting and Family Adjustment Scale (PAFAS) developed by Sanders M.R & Morawska A(2010) consisting of 30 items, with 4 point Likert scale and the score ranges from 0-90. Overall score on the scale range from 0- 90. Higher the score better the family adjustment. The data were analysed using correlation, t-test and Chi-square.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 . Correlation of independent variables with Parent Child Interaction and Family adjustment

SI NO	Demographic variables	Parent –child interaction	Family adjustment
1.	Age	1.34	.134
2.	Number of children	1.68	-.169
3.	Ordinal position	.019	-.327**
4.	Family income	.034	.051
5.	Education of father	.389**	.145
6.	Education of mother	1.83	-.097
7.	Occupation of father	-.064	.446
8.	Occupation of mother	-.064	.177
9.	Family size	.186	.016
10.	Family type	-.007	.020

Table 1 presents correlation of independent variables with Parent Child Interaction and Family adjustment. A negative significant relationship was observed between ordinal position and family adjustment indicating that the first born having less family adjustment. This may be due to more pampering by parents for first born, as a result leading to lesser family adjustment. The results are in line with the research findings by Tuckman and Regan, (1967)

The first born has special status. Even apart from considerations of inheritance, he is the center of attention and his wants and needs are frequently attended to, to the point of indulgence. If continued over too long a period, the child runs a risk of developing dependency habits which ultimately interfere with personal and social adjustment. With the arrival of a brother or sister the older child's way of life is threatened, which may lead to feelings of anxiety, jealousy, and hostility. Unless handled properly by the parents, these feelings lead to immature or excessive modes of adjustment in the older child. Although the oldest child historically has enjoyed prestige in the family hierarchy, he is often confronted with a situation requiring a wide range of adjustments because the parents are more likely to be youthful and immature, to be stricter, and to be over eager for accomplishments in the first born.

First-borns tend to be meticulous, conscientious, driven, ambitious, and experience more jealousy and envy. Additional traits include traditional, preference for law and order, more likely to be academically successful than siblings, independent, natural-born leader, protective, conventional, authoritative, domineering, prideful, overbearing, obedient, impatient, and cautious (Forer, 1976; Konig, 1963). Firstborns have a tendency to be more conservative and are also likely to be concerned with dealing with the pressures of upholding the family mores and attitudes. Baskett (1984) found that firstborns were more likely than other ordinal positions to receive negative responses from parents and other siblings following misconduct or failure. When a sibling is added, the firstborn may react with jealousy and anxiety following dethronement. As earlier noted, firstborn children tend crave and need parental approval, thus they can be prone to succumbing to parental pressure.

Further a positive significant relationship was observed between father's education and parent child interaction which means better the education better is the parent child interaction. The findings of study conducted by Holmes and Huston (2010) revealed that father average income and education levels relate to dyadic interaction, but individual and family characteristics account for their effects. Whereas a non-significant relationship was observed between age, number of children, ordinal position, family income, education of parents , occupation of parents, family size and type with parent child interaction and family adjustment.

Table 2- Inter-correlation between parent-child interaction and family adjustment

Variables	Family adjustment
Parent – child interaction	.519**

Table-2 reveals a positive and significant relationship between parent-child interaction and family adjustment indicating higher the parent child interaction better is the family adjustment. Family systems theory proposes that family processes are not only additive, but also interactive. The interactive nature of family processes suggests that the effects of fathers, mothers, and children on father-child interaction may vary as a function of each other. From a systemic perspective, these moderating influences create differences in family context which may contribute to varying father-child interactional outcomes (Holmes and Huston, 2010). Research has shown that secure attachment to parents facilitates children's adaptive adjustment. Securely attached children experience their parents as available and responsive to their needs. This security fosters adaptive exploration and buffers children from stress. Doyle and Marlene (2004). Findings by Stanger and Budney (2019) suggested that dyadic flexibility in the parent-child coping interaction was largely adaptive for child adjustment, whereas attractor strength demonstrated a more complex relationship with child adjustment outcomes.

The vast majority of research findings identify developmental trajectories that are in accordance with family systems theory. For example, Richmond and Stocker (2006) found that in highly cohesive families parents reported that their teen aged children demonstrated lower levels of externalizing problems. By comparison, Sturge-Apple *et al* (2010) found that kindergarten children from enmeshed and disengaged families demonstrated higher levels of internalizing and externalizing symptoms than did children from cohesive families.

Table 3: Comparison of parent child interaction based on independent variables (N- 50)

Variables	Parent child interaction		Mean ± SD	t-value
	Moderate	Good		
Age				
0 – 3 years	4	10	2.79 ± .426	-0.93
4 – 6 years	6	30	2.89 ± .329	
Number of children				
0 - 2	5	28	2.82 ± .392	-1.18*
3 - 4	5	12	2.94 ± .243	
Ordinal position				
0 – 2	6	36	2.86 ± .354	-1.31
3 – 4	4	4	2.86 ± .354	
Father occupation				
Government	5	34	2.87 ± .339	0.44
Private	2	9	2.82 ± .405	
Mother occupation				
Government	5	34	2.89 ± .340	0.45
Private	2	9	2.83 ± .406	
Family type				
Nuclear	4	25	2.86 ± .351	0.49
Joint	3	18	2.86 ± .359	

Education of father				
< 7th standard	3	0	2.00±.000	0.68
SSLC, High school and PUC	2	20	2.91±2.94	
Degree	2	23	2.92±.405	
Education of mother				
< 7th standard	0	2	3.00±.000	15.17**
SSLC, High school and PUC	6	20	2.77±.430	
Degree	1	21	2.95±.213	
Family income				
Up to 200000	4	18	2.82±.395	-0.14*
200000 - 400000	1	16	2.94±.243	
400000 and above	2	9	2.82±.405	
Family size				
0 - 4	4	15	2.79±.419	1.89
5 - 8	3	23	2.88±.326	
9 and above	0	5	3.00±.000	

The results presented in table 3 reveal that, a negative significant difference was found between number of children and parent child interaction, family income and parent child interaction. These results indicate that, as the number of children are more there is likely to be less interaction between parents and individual child, and also the increase in the family income decreased the parent child interaction. A significant difference was found between the mean scores of parent child interaction according to income levels of parents. Also a significant difference was observed in parent child interaction based on mother's education levels.

Table 4: Comparison of family adjustment based on independent variables (- 50)

Variables	Family adjustment		Mean ± SD	t-value
	Moderate	Good		
Age				
0 - 3 years	4	10	2.71 ± .469	0.09
4 - 6 years	6	30	2.83 ± .378	
Number of children				
0 - 2	5	28	2.85 ± .364	0.03
3 - 4	5	12	2.71 ± .470	
Ordinal position				
0 - 2	6	36	2.86 ± .354	2.40*
3 - 4	4	4	2.50 ± .535	
Father occupation				
Government	9	30	2.77 ± .427	-1.01
Private	1	10	2.91 ± .302	
Mother occupation				
Government	7	32	2.82 ± .389	0.67
Private	3	8	2.73 ± .402	
Family type				
Nuclear	6	23	2.79 ± .412	-1.40
Joint	4	17	2.81 ± .402	
Education of father				
< 7th standard	3	0	2.00 ± .000	9.46**
SSLC, High school and PUC	5	17	2.77 ± .429	
Degree	2	23	2.92 ± .277	
Education of mother				
< 7th standard	1	1	2.50 ± .707	9.46**

SSLC, High school and PUC	6	20	2.77 ± .430	
Degree	3	19	2.86 ± .351	
Family income				
Up to 200000	6	16	2.73 ± .456	1.61
200000 - 400000	1	16	2.94 ± .243	
400000 and above	3	8	2.73 ± .467	
Family size				
0 - 4	3	16	2.84 ± .375	1.10
5 - 8	7	19	2.73 ± .452	
9 and above	0	5	3.00 ± .000	

Table 4 shows the comparison of family adjustment based on independent variables. The results revealed that, a significant difference (t= 2.40*) at 5 per cent level was observed in family adjustments between children having different ordinal positions. Further a significant difference was observed in family adjustment among children having parents with different educational levels.

Sánchez *et al.* (2006) identified negative domains within the family such as low parental school involvement, socioeconomic status, and educational level to explain Latino youths' educational failure. Behnke *et al.* (2004) found a connection between Latino youth's educational and occupational expectations and their parents' education. Fathers' and mothers' degrees have a strong degree of convergence (r=.46, p<.01)

The correlation shows the independent variable of degree attained by mothers was not positively correlated with any dependant variable. This finding contrasted Chiu and Khoo's (2005) study showing mothers' not fathers' years of schooling affected their child's school performance.

CONCLUSION:

Research has shown that secure attachment to parents facilitates children's adaptive adjustment. Securely attached children experience their parents as available and responsive to their needs. This security fosters adaptive exploration and buffers children from stress. To foster children's self-esteem, parents need to provide them with a warm and nurturing environment as well as with opportunities that encourage a sense of individuality. Parents convey pleasure and acceptance of their children through praise, interactive play, and active listening.

Parent child interaction provides resources that can help an individual cope with stress, engage in healthier behaviors, and enhance self-esteem, leading to higher well-being. Positive social interactions have a wide range of both physical and mental benefits, including increased cognitive ability, good mental health, communication skills and independence. family time should be a fun and enjoyable way to raise healthy and happy children that love and feel loved. Then the child will know that "matter" and this will be reflected in their life choices.

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