

Parental support perceived in the parent-child dyad

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Abstract

It has become a certainty that effective parenting requires a high level of control and monitoring. The parental support provided during the pregnancy predicts a good functioning of the child, generates a socially, mentally and emotionally healthy competent child, who functions well under stress (Auerbach et al., 2011).

In this study we investigate the parental support perceived in the parent - child dyad (by including both parents and adolescents rather than relying only on parent reports). The participants were represented by the parent-child couple (adolescent from high schools), so the participants were 86 dyad parent child who completed the questionnaire in google form, Perceived Parental Autonomy Support Scale (P-PASS; Mageau et al. 2015). The applied questionnaire assesses parents' perceptions of supporting their own autonomy (offering choice, recognizing the child's feelings and providing a reason for rules and requirements), parental control (criticisms of guilt, use of threats and performance pressures) and adolescents' perceptions of the same variables.

Results showed that parents' perceived autonomy support from their own parents that is not associated with adolescents' perception of the liberty to make their own choices and providing rationale for rules and demands; the only supportive parenting construct reflected in adolescents' perception being the acknowledgment of their feelings.

Key words: Parents, children, perceived parental support, parental control

Introduction

The harmonious growth of the child is strictly conditioned by the quality of his care; According to Jacob and Leonard (1994), these cares, along with attachment, love, acceptance and cohesion, sum up the qualities of effective or successful parenting. It is already certain that the dimensions mentioned above as well as praise, encouragement and affection are the fundamental ingredients in raising a happy and healthy child. Parental practices related to how we offer affection and when, how we discipline the child, if and how we apply punishments, to what extent we offer him freedom and many other questions that any parent asks himself, can turn the parent-child dyad into a lifelong partnership, or they can throw them into painful and endless conflicts. They can also turn the child into a resilient and competent adult or a dysfunctional and dependent one. Parental control can be intrusive, inconsistent, or declining, and this has significant emotional and behavioral consequences. Indeed, the relationship with the parents is the primary resource, the standard in building the image of self and life, is the deepest and most consistent relationship that a child has.

Positive parenting protects against fear, builds a secure attachment, disciplines by offering respect, limits and rules, monitors and provides predictability; these practices facilitate receptivity, building a solid self, self-regulation, balance, confidence and an optimistic perception of the world in general.

The subject of parenting is strongly related to the theory of self-determination; What are the basic psychological needs that parents should have in mind when educating and raising a child? We now know that there are three basic psychological needs that facilitate the construction of a well-defined self, namely the need for autonomy, the need for competence and the need for relationships. The satisfaction of these needs is achieved or ensured by the parents / primary caregivers of the child at least in the first years of life, continuing then and taking different forms. Numerous studies have identified implications for autonomy in various areas of development; satisfying the need for autonomy, for example, is considered to be the most important for the development and maintenance of activities that are intrinsically motivated. Therefore, the feeling of authenticity, the well-being conferred by the involvement in activities or relationships according to the needs of the individual are conditioned on the one hand by the satisfaction of this need. We refer in this paper to the way that children / adolescents understand parental support, respectively the practices that parents use in their upbringing / education. The area of research on meeting these needs has expanded in the fields of education, sports, health (Miczo, Miczo, & Johnson, 2006), with work showing that they allow for positive outcomes such as well-being (Niemi et al. 2006) or performance (Sheldon, 2001)

Literature review

The concept of autonomy has aroused the interest of psychologists especially considering its importance both in theoretical discussions and in understanding some processes; for Dworkin (1981, 203) the notion of autonomy requires the identification and critical reflection of an agent on his first-order motivations. Only when a person identifies with the influences that motivate him, and assimilates them, is he autonomous. The present study considered positive self-belief, including self-esteem, self-efficacy, and optimism as an adaptive psychological aspect of well-being, and treated psychological distress that included negative emotional states of depression, anxiety, and anger as a maladaptive psychological aspect of well-being. This study aims to expand current research on parental support for adolescents in several important ways.

This study seeks to analyze the structure of an original tool for investigating parental support perceived by young people. The tool is the Perceived Parental Autonomy Support Scal which was applied to the parent-child couple (aged between x and y). The questionnaire measures the freedom that parents give their children in making decisions that affect them, the extent to which they argue the demands and limits they impose, the recognition of feelings, threats and punishments that they apply (understood as conditions), criticism and induction. guilt. Of course, these dimensions acquire different connotations depending on the cultural determinant, and parenting in Romania is distinguished by several peculiarities related to the dimensions discussed. An intercultural study concludes that the association of perceived parental warmth is associated with a high level of self-esteem, however, self-esteem has different levels depending on the cultural context (Farruggia et al., 2004). The results suggested that although levels of self-esteem differed by cultural context, the association between parental support and self-esteem was similar in different contexts of well-being or motivation or autonomy (Kocayo, Altınta, İċbay, 2015). Recognizing the autonomy, more precisely the need for autonomy of the child is a requirement that must be met. Constituting one of the three fundamental psychological needs along with relationship and competence, autonomy refers to the freedom that an individual to be and act without being controlled by external forces (Legault, 2016). To be the protagonist of one's own life is an artistic expression of autonomy; According to the theory of self-determination (Ryan and So, 2004), this psychological need needs to be met for optimal growth. Parental support takes a number of forms such as the emotional resources provided by parents (Cohen,

1988), information, warmth, advice, material or financial support (Cutrona and Russell, 1990).

Another dimension that the questionnaire considers refers to the threats and punishments (targeted by questions 3, 10, 15, 20) that parents apply to their children in the process of disciplining them. An older study conducted by Save the Children Romania (2015) shows that over 60% of families use corporal punishment to correct various behaviors. Other forms of punishment are considered withdrawal of the condition, conditioning, inducing guilt and humiliation.

In an epochal work *Empathy and moral development: Implications for caring and justice*, Hoffman (2000) emphasizes the importance of expressing parental empathy in situations where they want to form prosocial behaviors in their children. He draws attention to the tendency of parents to induce feelings of guilt when they set out to teach them about the negative consequences of their actions. The questions in the questionnaire aim to identify the situations in which children experience feelings of guilt that they experience when it manifests itself contrary to their parents' expectations. Rote (2014) suggests that these guilt-inducing behaviors are perceived by children as a negative parental practice or psychological control. However, guilt is understood as a process of consciousness involves a prosocial function, their study pointing out stages in the process of development (Vaish and Hepach, 2020). In a study that looked at the consequences of emotional autonomy on psychosocial adjustment in the context of parenting, Beyers and Goossens (1999) found that the interaction between emotional autonomy and authority alone explained a significantly greater variation in self-confidence. In determining the level of support for autonomy, a number of factors such as the child's level of competence, the mother's style or the setting itself are important variables (Grolnick et al., 2002). There are a variety of contextual factors and people who tend to promote autonomy and there are also people who tend to control. The study by Deci & Ryan (1987) shows that support for autonomy has generally been associated with greater intrinsic motivation, increased motivation and significant creativity.

Objectives

The goal of the present research is to investigate the autonomy support in the parent-child relationship by including both parents and adolescents rather than relying only on parent reports. It is expected that parents' perception regarding their own parents' behavior to be associated with adolescents' perception, both for autonomy – supportive and controlling style of parenting.

Research Methodology

The research is descriptive in nature. It uses primary data collected through questionnaires from 86 parents-adolescent dyads. Adolescents currently studying in high school in the Arad country area were taken into the study.

Participants

Participants were 86 parents-adolescent dyads. We recruited participants via the adolescents' high schools, which were situated in the Arad county area. Parents (88.4 % mothers and 10.5 % fathers) were aged between 29 and 62 years ($M = 42.02$ years, $SD = 7.53$ years) while their adolescents (61.6 % girls and 19.8 % boys) were aged between 13 and 24 years ($M = 18.07$ years, $SD = 2.63$ years). In terms of education, 2.3 % of the sample completed primary school, 40.7 % obtained a high-school or technical diploma, and 55.8 % received a university degree. A total of 43 subjects (50.0 %) live in the urban area and 41 subjects (47.7 %) live in the rural area.

Procedure

We conducted online research using Google forms, which hosts online surveys. We created an online survey consisting of items related to parental support and demographic questions. We also described the main goals of research and emphasized voluntary participation and the confidentiality of answers. The survey was shared through social media and e-mails.

Data Analysis and results

Parametric correlations among parents' perception regarding their own parents' autonomy support (provision of choice, acknowledgement of the child's feelings and provision of a rationale for rules and demands) and controlling parenting (guilt-inducing criticisms, use of threats and performance pressures) and adolescents' perception regarding the same variables were examined in order to explore the relations between both perceptions of parenting behavior (Table 1-6).

Table 1

		Parents' provision of choice	Adolescents' provision of choice
Parents' provision of choice	Pearson Correlation	1	-.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.691
	N	86	67
Adolescents' provision of choice	Pearson Correlation	-.049	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.691	
	N	67	67

Correlations revealed that parents' perception regarding the provision of choice is unrelated to adolescents' perceptions regarding the same construct, but has a negative trend; the situation is similar for the rationales for rules and demands. However, the parents' perception regarding the acknowledgement of the feelings is associated with adolescents' perceptions, $r = .25$, $p < .05$.

Table 2

		Parents' rationale for rules	Adolescents' rationale for rules
Parents' rationale for rules	Pearson Correlation	1	.210
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.088
	N	86	67
Adolescents' rationale for rules	Pearson Correlation	.210	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.088	
	N	67	67

Table 3

		Parents' acknowledgement of feelings	Adolescents' acknowledgement of feelings
Parents' acknowledgement of feelings	Pearson Correlation	1	.250*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.041
	N	86	67
Adolescents' acknowledgement of feelings	Pearson Correlation	.250*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	
	N	67	67

Un unexpected value of the correlations coefficient between parents' and adolescents' perceptions regarding the use of threats, $r = 1.00$, $p = .00$. revealed perfect associations; and as well as correlations between parents' and adolescents' perceptions regarding the performance under pressure ($r = .35$, $p < .05$) and the guild induced criticism ($r = .31$, $p < .05$). Criticism, one of the psychological dimensions of parental control is frequently found in parental practices in Romania; "I grew up with criticism ... and I think it can correct mistakes if it's not exaggerated"; The perfect association between the two dimensions can be explained by the perpetuation by parents of parental control over the observed and experienced control in their turn as children.

Table 4

		Parents' use of threats	Adolescents' use of threats
Parents' use of threats	Pearson Correlation	1	1.000**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	66	66
Adolescents' use of threats	Pearson Correlation	1.000**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	66	66

Table 5

		Parents' performance pressures	Adolescents' performance pressures
Parents' performance pressures	Pearson Correlation	1	.353**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	86	66
Adolescents' performance pressures	Pearson Correlation	.353**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	66	66

Table 5

		Parents' performance pressures	Adolescents' performance pressures
Parents' performance pressures	Pearson Correlation	1	.353**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	86	66
Adolescents' performance pressures	Pearson Correlation	.353**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	66	66

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to explore the parental support perceived in the parent-child dyad; We assessed the extent to which the parent felt the support of the parents (as a child) and how this perception is related to the children's perception of parental behavior. Both parents and adolescents evaluated their parents' use of autonomy supportive and controlling behaviors using the Perceived Parental Autonomy Support Scale (P-PASS; Mageau et al. 2015). The P-PASS measures three autonomy-supportive behaviors and three controlling practices using a 4-item subscale per behavior. Autonomy-supportive behaviors are provision of choice (e.g., "My parents gave me many opportunities to make my own decisions about what I was doing"), acknowledgement of the child's feelings (e.g., "My parents were open to my thoughts and feelings even when they were different from theirs"), and provision of a rationale for rules and demands (e.g., "When my parents asked me to do something, they explained why they wanted me to do it"). Controlling behaviors are guilt-inducing criticisms (e.g., "My parents made me feel guilty for anything and everything"), use of threats (e.g., "When I refused to do something, my parents threatened to take away certain privileges in order to make me do it"), and performance pressures (e.g., "My parents refused to accept that I could want simply to have fun without trying to be the best"). Total scores for autonomy support and controlling parenting were obtained by averaging the relevant subscales. Reliability coefficients were high ($\alpha = .80$) for autonomy support and controlling parenting, as well as for the six subscales).

Past research shows that autonomy-supportive and controlling behaviors form two separate factors in exploratory factor analyses (Mageau et al. 2015). Also, higher-order factor analysis showed that the six subscales load in expected ways on two higher-order factors, with three subscales loading on an autonomy-supportive second-order factor and three subscales loading on a controlling one (Fournier et al. 2010).

Conclusion

Results showed that parents' perceived autonomy support from their own parents is not associated with adolescents' perception of the liberty to make their own choices and providing rationale for rules and demands. The only supportive parenting construct reflected in adolescents' perception being the acknowledgment of their feelings. Moreover, parents' perception regarding the use of threats is strongly associated with adolescents' perception, as well as the other two constructs of controlling parenting, guilt-inducing criticisms and performance pressures. It was also found that adolescents feelings were seen as the only supportive parenting construct.

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