



Methodological Establishment of the Research on the Exploration of Parenting Styles in Families Rearing Children Between 0-7 Years

Melinda Csima

Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Science, Hungary,
petone.csima.melinda@uni-mate.hu

Kinga Lampek

University of Pécs, Faculty of Health Sciences, Hungary, kinga.lampek@etk.pte.hu

József Betlehem

University of Pécs, Faculty of Health Sciences, Hungary, betlehem@etk.pte.hu

Bálint Bánfai

University of Pécs, Faculty of Health Sciences, Hungary, balint.banfai@etk.pte.hu

Sára Jeges

University of Pécs, Faculty of Health Sciences, Hungary, sara.jeges@etk.pte.hu

Krisztina Deutsch

University of Pécs, Faculty of Health Sciences, Hungary, krisztina.deutsch@etk.pte.hu

During the socialization process, educational influences on the child determine their personality development fundamentally, so getting to know the educational practices of parents' is one of the central issues in educational science. The aims of our study, focusing on the parenting styles of parents raising children aged 0-7 living in Hungary, were: (1) to refine a quantitative research tool, (2) combine it with a qualitative tool and (3) to relate the results of two studies carried out with different methodologies. Prior to the questionnaire survey, as part of this research focus group interviews occurred, in which a total of 93 parents attended. The recorded opinions from the focus group interviews provided an opportunity to explore deeper connections. During the questionnaire data collection, a total of 980 parents were included in the study after representative sampling for type of settlement and age group. To explore their parenting style the modified version of the Child-rearing Practices Report (CRPR) was applied. After learning about the scale characteristics of parenting style, our attention was directed to the main characteristics of parenting style and the differentiating factors of parenting practice. Among the parents involved in the research caring, flexible child-rearing attitudes and practices were pronounced.

Keywords: parenting style, care, child rearing, early childhood, restriction

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INTRODUCTION

There is mounting evidence that the emotional relationship between parent and child, the direct and indirect educational influences have a lifelong impact in terms of personality development and successful socialization (Bowly, 1969; Ainsworth et al., 1978; Ranschburg, 1995; Sallay & Münnich, 1999; Antonucci et al., 2004; Boutelle et al., 2009; Brand et al., 2009; Arusubila & Subasree, 2016; Adegboyega et al., 2017; Purwati & Japar, 2017; Aminat, 2019; Pali et al., 2021). The events of early childhood, especially the educational effects on children determine fundamentally the chances of a child starting school, thus contributing to the quality of life and their future (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Heckman et al., 2010; Pascal & Bertram, 2013). The majority of parents have a definite idea of what characteristics their child should have and they believe that they know which educational procedures/parenting practices lead to these characteristics, however, their knowledge of child-rearing and the solution of emerging problems is not always correct. Over the past decades, a number of studies have drawn attention to the fact that inappropriate parenting practices, such as overprotective behaviour, inconsistency or excessive performance expectations, in itself may be a risk factor from the aspect of the child's healthy personality development, therefore understanding the educational experience is a central issue in educational as well as in psychological studies (Castrucci & Gerlach, 2006; Arusubila & Subasree, 2016; Ergül et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2022). Accordingly, scientific research has shed light on various aspects of parenting styles and their impact on child development (Sallay & Münnich, 1999; Popov & Ilesanmi, 2015). However, relatively few established critical observations can be read in connection with the applied research tools.

The examination of parenting attitude

The parenting/educational attitude includes the emotional connection between parent and child, rearing procedures used by the parent, the parent's parenting practices and parenting principles and views. In a learning theory approach, parenting style is actually a set of parenting behaviours (Oroszné, 2002). The sociological, pedagogical and psychological surveys took different approaches to parenting styles. The range of the applied methods is wide, researchers developed more than a hundred different measuring tools (interviews, observation, attitude scale) for the testing of parental attitudes. A significant number of testing tools have analysed the parenting style of parents in two bipolar dimensions according to the typology of Schaefer (1959) – autonomy-control and love-hate dimensions. Measuring of child-care practice was implemented over a long period by standardized questionnaires (PARI, CRPB, MAS, PAQ) and interviews by asking the parents or by observing the parent-child interaction (Schaefer & Bell, 1958; Block, 1965; Cohler et al., 1970). By measuring parenting style using standardized questionnaires parents report on their own parenting practices or behaviours. However, self-administrated questionnaires are subject to biases, such as social desirability bias (King & Bruner, 2000) (parents may report what they believe is socially desirable rather than their actual behaviours) or subjective interpretations of their own behaviours. Furthermore, researchers use cross-sectional designs, where data is collected at a single point in time. Cross-sectional designs can provide a snapshot of

parenting practices and child outcomes, but they do not capture the dynamic nature of parenting processes over time.

Unlike the early models, Baumrind (1971) described typology based on empirical experience from interviews with parents, the observation of parent-child relationship and the pre-school child behaviours, which has set three separate parenting styles. In her typology, Baumrind distinguishes between authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles.

In the late '80s, researchers became increasingly interested in grasping the parenting style through the perception of the child. Accordingly, during the recording of the data the compiled questionnaire is filled out by the children, thus parental attitudes are obtained through the children's perception. Examination of the educational principles via the child's perception increasingly gained ground during the surveys, which of course also means that during the design of the studies, the researcher must consider that children with an appropriate age have to be involved into the study, who are able to answer questions.

Although the results of the last decades have provided more and more information for researchers about parenting attitudes, for those professionals whose primary task is to support parental competence, this information may seem scarce.

METHOD

The aim of our research carried out under the SROP 6.1.4 Early Childhood program, was the recognition of parental attitudes related to child raising, as well as the identification of factors affecting the parenting experience (Csima et al., 2016). The reason for this was to separate the different parenting practices arising from the different socio-cultural backgrounds and traditions of the parents from neglect, which endangers the optimal development of children. In addition to exploring parenting style, our primary goal was to find out to what extent parents are informed about their child's development, as well as the level of parental satisfaction with basic child care. In this study, we present our findings regarding parenting styles.

The type of the research

Our research is an exploratory, cross-sectional, and descriptive study. In respect of the research problem which is the basis of the survey, both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied. The issues of focus group interviews were: (1) child-rearing practice, (2) manifestation of love towards the child, (3) reward and punishment in the family. In the first step, the focus group interviews were transcribed and then they were analyzed by descriptive statistics. The recognized opinions through the focus group interviews helped us to compile the questionnaire as the quantitative research tool, furthermore, provided an opportunity to compare and contrast the results obtained using different research methods and to gain a more accurate understanding of parents' opinions about educational practices.

Identification of the target population and sample, and the method of sampling

The target group of the research was a group of parents with children between 0-7 years living in Hungary. The randomly selected areas with nationwide coverage in the research were six counties. The questionnaires were allocated by nurses. The sampling was implemented as part of a two-stage random proportional method. 380 nurses chose three children between 0-7 years each, randomly from the children population within the district boundaries. 980 evaluable questionnaires remained after the recording of the 1140 pieces of distributed questionnaires. In our questionnaire-based study, one parent (or caregiver) represented the parents. As part of this research, retaining the national coverage 10 focus group interviews occurred, in which a total of 93 parents attended.

The applied research tool for the examination of parenting attitude – Modified version of the block child-rearing practices report (CRPR)

Reviewing the available standardized tests during the compiling of the research tools of our quantitative study examining the parenting style of parents, we considered the age of the children whose parents were involved in the survey and the research targets were to select the list of questions which may prove to be suitable. The CRPR questionnaire emerged from the other reviewed standardized questionnaires concerning their contents, since its statements highly suited our research goal. The restrictions, as well as the caring dimension, appear in the statements. Taking into account the above factors, the CRPR series of questions modified by Rickel and Biasatti (1982) was found to be suitable to answer the research questions.

The CRPR questionnaire originally contained 91 allegations concerning socialization. Rickel and Biasatti reduced it to a 40-item Likert-format series of questions. During the validation of a questionnaire two factors were identified by the researchers. The elements of the first factor (22 statements) present the aspects of child-rearing attitudes and practices related to control, so that a high score means the support of such parenting practice which aims to control the behaviour of the children, including their feelings. The elements do not allow spontaneity nor care about the feelings of the child. Due to the limitations of the children in this respect, the first factor was defined as a limiting factor. The elements of the second factor (18 statements) support flexible child-rearing attitudes and practices. These elements represent the willingness of the parents to listen to the children and share emotions and experiences with them. The second factor was named “care” by the researchers. The level of internal consistency and reliability of the elements that made up the two named factors is high, which persisted for several different samples. (Samples were made up of metropolitan parents, parents with middle-upper income and students at an urban university.) The short version of the CRPR questionnaire is a more compact way to summarize child-rearing practices with scales that have proven reliability and validity.

The application of the modified CRPR in the course of the survey

Out of the reviewed questionnaires, the revised version of the CRPR suited mostly our research purposes, accordingly, it was found to be suitable to be a research tool to examine the parenting style of parents with children between 0-7 years. After the

translation of the questionnaire containing 40 statements, the following four statements were removed, because these statements cannot be applied to parents with children under seven years of age:

- „I do not allow my child to say bad things about his/her teachers.”
- „I dread answering my child's questions about sex.”
- „I do not think children should be given sexual information.”
- „I feel a child should have time to think, daydream, and even loaf sometimes.”

Accordingly, the questionnaire originally containing 22 statements expressing restrictive parenting practices was narrowed to 19 statements, and the questionnaire originally containing 18 statements and describing caring parenting practices was narrowed to 17 statements.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the questionnaire survey

The main characteristics of the attitude of parents related to child rearing

Parenting style was measured with the 36 statements describing parenting attitudes by 6-point Likert-scale. The scale ranges from 1 (not at all typical of me) to 6 (completely characteristic), with one-way values in all cases. Prior to exploration of the child-rearing attitudes of parents involved in the study, a Varimax rotated principal component analysis was performed to assess whether our sample of parenting styles is separated along the two dimensions found in research literature. The elements were separated into two factors identified by us based on the own values of the program, as it is shown in Table 1. With the exception of three statements, each element is included above 0.40 factor weight, separated the same way as it was published by Rickel and Biasatti. Table 1 contains the first 19 elements with factor weights, while in Table 2 the second 17 elements with factor weights. Both scales proved to be consistent, Cronbach 'alpha ~ 90%. Based on a statistical analysis of statements examining the restrictions dimension it can be concluded that the strongest consensus is related to the method of control on a child (Table 1). Responses to each statement also reflect that in terms of the whole sample limitation is less present. The CRPR questionnaire applied in our study expresses the 'soft' democratic characteristic of the limitations, which fact was taken into account in further analysis.

Table 1
Statistical characteristics of the dimension of restriction (N=980)

List of elements	Weight of factor	Mean	Deviation
I believe my child should be aware of how much I sacrifice for him/her	0.648	2.22	1.41
I expect my child to be grateful and appreciate all the advantages she/he has	0.651	2.96	1.53
I teach my child that in one way or another punishment will find him/her when she/he is bad	0.611	3.51	1.53
I teach my child to keep control of his/her feelings at all times	0.646	3.28	1.45
I believe children should not have secrets from their parents.	0.554	4.14	1.53
I control my child by warning him/her about the bad things that can happen to him/her	0.554	4.27	1.37
I believe that scolding and criticism make my child improve	0.604	2.56	1.36
I let my child know how ashamed and disappointed I am when she/he misbehaves.	0.638	2.75	1.49
I want my child to make a good impression on others.	0.673	3.67	1.43
I try to keep my child away from children or families who have different ideas or values from our own.	0.513	3.00	1.46
I think a child should be encouraged to do things better than others.	0.625	2.84	1.40
I instruct my child not to get dirty while s/he is playing	0.594	2.03	1.16
I do not want my child to be looked upon as different from others	0.510	3.52	1.74
I do not think young children of different sexes should be allowed to see each other naked	0.493	2.65	1.52
I do not allow my child to question my decisions.	0.607	3.37	1.49
I believe that a child should be seen and not heard	0.599	1.99	1.16
I do not allow my child to get angry with me	0.634	2.36	1.32
I believe in toilet training a child as soon as possible	0.544	3.59	1.65
I prefer that my child not try things if there is a chance, she/he misbehaves.	0.554	2.35	1.31

Descriptive statistical analysis examining the caring dimension statements showed that in terms of the whole pattern care is highly typical of the interviewed, since in the case of the majority of the allegations the "typically me" answers predominate (Table 2). This result is not surprising given that the sample contained parents of children between 0-7 years of age, and at this age, care is really pronounced because of the child's bio-psycho-social needs.

Table 2
Statistical characteristics of the dimension of care (N=980)

List of elements	Weight of factor	Mean	Deviation
My child and I have warm, intimate times together.	0.633	5.30	0.93
I encourage my child to talk about his/her problems.	0.746	5.41	0.94
I joke and play with my child	0.339	5.53	0.78
I make sure my child knows that I appreciate what she/he tries or accomplishes.	0.781	5.57	0.75
I encourage my child to wonder and think about life.	0.796	5.48	0.83
I express my affection by hugging, kissing, and holding my child.	0.616	5.54	0.77
I talk it over and reason with my child when she/he misbehaves.	0.782	5.43	0.83
I find it interesting and educational to be with my child long periods.	0.819	5.45	0.80
I encourage my child to be curious, to explore and question things.	0.787	5.46	0.84
I find some of my greatest satisfactions in my child.	0.643	5.49	0.78
When I am angry with my child, I let him/her know it.	0.306	4.90	1.11
I respect my child's opinions and encourage him/her to express them.	0.663	5.07	0.94
I feel a child should be given comfort and understanding when she/he is scared or upset.	0.726	5.61	0.71
I am easy-going and relaxed with my child.	0.380	4.72	1.00
I trust my child to behave as she/he should, even when I am not with him/her.	0.554	5.10	0.88
I believe in praising a child when she/he is good and think it gets better results than punishing him/her when she/he is bad.	0.674	5.30	0.91
I usually take into account my child's preferences in making plans for the family.	0.683	5.42	0.84

Differentiating factors of parental style

Based on our analysis, between the highest level of education regarding the mother and the parenting practice of restriction a strong correlation can be observed ($p < 0.01$). The higher the mother's education level is, the more increased care is featured in the child-care practice, and with it the less restriction will appear in the parenting practice. The analysis of data has a negative direction, with weak closeness, a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) is proven between the mother's age and the dimension scale of restrictions, which expresses the fact that the older the mother is, the less restrictive she tends to be. The scale values in the dimension of care increase together with the mother's age, which expresses that the older the mother is, the more flexible child-rearing attitudes will be displayed in the parenting practice. The settlement hierarchy influences parenting practices in a way that the smaller the town where one lives is, the more often the approach that the parent wants to control the child's behaviour, including also what to feel will appear in his parenting practice. Our analyzes suggest that in gypsy/roma families restriction appears stronger in the parenting practice than in Hungarian families. As a child's age progresses, parental limitation, control is more pronounced, however, care is pushed slightly into the background.

In summary the analysis of factors influencing attitudes of parents related to child rearing has revealed that the mother's highest level of education, mother's age, family residence, ethnic origin of the respondent (parent/caregiver) and age of the child variables seem to be relevant from the aspect of parenting style, significantly affecting the attitudes of parents regarding parenting. Of course, these variables are not independent from each other. For example, gypsy/roma people are significantly younger than those others; people with a higher level of education are older than those with lower qualifications; a higher rate of romas/gypsies live in smaller towns and villages than in county seats or in the capital; also, the age of the child and the mother correlates. The question arises: to what extent do these independent variables contribute to the parenting practices of the parents, to what extent can the parental attitudes be affected directly and through other variables? Multiple linear regression models are suitable to explore the above-mentioned issues if the model terms and conditions meet.

Result of the analysis of multiple linear regression

A parenting attitude-scale was prepared as a dependent variable which is the sum of the values of 36 values given for the item (1-6 scores), considered that, based on the literature in terms of child development, which responses are favourable and unfavourable. After the conversion of non-ambivalent categorical variables (mother's level of education and type of settlement) into dummy variables, independent variables in the model overall 'explained' 27% of the variance in parenting style. Parenting style is most significantly determined by the mother's highest level of education, and more specifically if it is low or not. This means that in this respect there is a significant difference between those with higher education and those with a maximum of eight years of primary school. During stepwise analysis, the parent's ethnic affiliation automatically entered secondly into the model as a factor strongly influencing parental attitudes. The relationship between ethnicity and parenting style cannot be explained

with the fact that the educational level of gypsy/roma mothers is significantly lower than that of non-roma mothers, because the explaining effect of ethnicity variable remained significant concerning the family involved into the study, despite the control of educational level. If the fact, that there are gypsy/roma families where the majority are rural people, is considered, ethnic affiliation remains a significant data. The level of education, ethnicity, and type of settlement variables thus directly 'affect' the parenting style, however, besides all the control on these, the age of a child is also linked with these in such a way that with the increase of the child's age the parenting style becomes more restrictive and less caring.

Results of focus group interviews¹

The examination of the parenting attitudes in focus group interviews began with associations related to child rearing and reward. Child rearing triggered a positive emotional, mental association in most of them, which expresses that they perceive child-rearing as a life-long, emotion-loaded experience: *the greatest happiness (4), the greatest pleasure (4), blessing (2), tranquillity (2) profession, the element of life, great adventure*. In addition, however, there may be associations which highlighted the difficulties of raising children: *remorse, bumpy road, a lot of trouble, suffering, disaster, defiance era, difficulty, tattered nerves, grey hair*. Besides these associations it was typical to emphasize the responsibility of child rearing: *liability (4), great task (4), challenges (3), consistency (2) teaching (2) learning, collaboration, work*.

Concerning rewards several people mentioned *the importance of rewards (8)*, whose main role is motivation, recognition of success or expressing satisfaction. Mostly *praise (6) recognition (2), inspiration* were mentioned, but the reward like *emotional blackmail (2)* has also been released. Associations for the method of reward were also mentioned: *money (3), encouragement (3), chocolate (2), you are clever (2), clapping*.

Emotional attitudes related to children in the topic of family rearing practice can be summarized with the following results.

Manifestation of love towards the child

Manifestation of love is considered to be important by most parents, some of them control its occurrence, however, there are parents who consider it unnecessary. A significant number of parents express love through physical contact (19): hugging, cuddling, patting, kisses. This is supplemented by caressing and saying, "I love you". There were parents among the respondents who placed the expression of love in a wider context: for them caring, active presence and encouragement, attention, conversation takes place (7).

¹ In this chapter, numbers in brackets indicate gaining the same answers from more than one respondent.

Reward and punishment in the family

During the educational process - most parents agreed on that - reward and punishment are needed, because this development will help to teach children to make a distinction between right and wrong. However, there were some respondents who avoided rewards due to the fear projected into the future. Based on the telling of parents' reward is a positive reinforcement, encouragement, motivation, and happens less by object rewards, instead, praise, programs spent together are gifts to the children. In addition, many families - especially grandparents - give candies, toys, cash prizes, even if the parents disapprove of it. A number of the respondents considered it essential that the rewards should not become a routine, they are reserved for special occasions.

Several parents emphasized that in the case of punishment children should always know why they are punished. Parents punish children if dangerous self- and / or public behaviour occurs, when they are disobedient, when they speak badly or if they declare their feelings in an improper way, if they hurt other children or if they break the known rules of behaviour. During punishment, for parents' consistency and enforceability are the most important issues to be considered, while they admit that this is rarely successful. Among the most common punishments corporal punishment has been mentioned in some form so that it is associated with a relieving justification. It was a common opinion that physical abuse is better than psychological intimidation, humiliation, or keeping the child in fear. A number of parents applied a withdrawal of a planned event or experience. They find it instructive; it is considered memorable for the child. Those who follow these forms of punishment strongly reject almost all cases of physical abuse. The third way of revealed "penalties" in the focus group interviews was the rigorous parent and preventing the child from the continuation of the misconduct. This was only mentioned by a few parents, emphasizing that a penalty can be avoided even so, however several members of the group debated on the effectiveness of the method concerned.

CONCLUSION

Research results of the last decades have provided quite a lot of information for parents on parenting attitudes, however, these studies mostly focused on examining the parenting style through the perception of the child at nursery age and older than seven. Thus, we do not have sufficient knowledge about the attitude of parents with children between 0-7 years, therefore this research proves to be supplementary in this area. Our study focuses on the recognition of the attitude of parents with children between 0-7 years related to child-rearing, the exploration of the affecting factors, accordingly, the style of parenting as a dependent variable was included in our analysis. When developing research tools, our primary aim was to ensure research methodology basis by keeping the requirements of validity, reliability, and compliance objectivity.

Based on the analysis of the characteristics of parenting style, similar to Sarwar (2016) it can be stated that among the parents involved in the research, aspects, and practices of child-rearing attitudes related to control were less emphasized while caring, flexible child-rearing attitudes and practices were more pronounced.

Our analysis exploring the differentiating factors of parenting style draws attention to the fact that parenting attitudes are affected by the mother's highest level of education, age, family residence, the respondent's (parent/caregiver) ethnicity as well as the child's age directly and indirectly.

Similar parenting attitudes were drawn from the results of focus group interviews, as of to the questionnaire studies: a minority of parents reported the restrictive rules in the life of the child, demand for obedience, the authoritarian parenting attitudes. Care has a strong presence in the life of the parents, as almost every type of item appeared emphatically during the discussions.

Measuring parenting practices and child outcomes can be complex and challenging. Many parenting constructs, such as warmth, control, or responsiveness, are multidimensional and can be difficult to operationalize. It is important for researchers to be aware of the methodological challenges and limitations and to use rigorous research designs and methods to overcome them. Valid and reliable research tools, as well as careful consideration of potential biases and limitations, are crucial for advancing our understanding of parenting style and its impact on child development.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interests regarding this article.

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