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Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

THE RELATION BETWEEN PARENTING AND CHILD PERSONALITY

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Abstract

The current study examined the associations between the child personality and parent-child relationships in two-child families. 316 two-parent families with two children aged 11–23 participated in the study. Intrapair age differences between siblings were not more, than 5 years. Parents and children completed Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) and Locus of control scale. Parent-child relationships were assessed by Parent-Child Interaction Questionnaire with parallel versions for the parents and adolescents. Both parent and child assessments of parent-child relationships were significantly correlated with siblings' personality traits. Child personality traits were more related to maternal assessments of parent-child relationships (especially for younger sibling) than to paternal. Neuroticism and locus of control were the most related traits to the child perception of parenting. Siblings' neuroticism negatively correlated with the perception of parental positive relations and positively with the parental negative control. Siblings' locus of control demonstrated an inverse pattern: it positively correlated with perception of parental positive relations and negatively with parental negative control. Hierarchical regression analysis showed that parental negative control was a significant predictor for neuroticism and locus of control of both siblings.

Keywords: Locus of control, neuroticism, parent-child relations, personality, siblings.

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1. Introduction

Since early researches an associations between the parenting and child's personality has been postulated in psychology (Baldwin et al., 1949; Baumrind, 1966, Sears et al., 1957). Many associations between personality and parent-child relationships were discovered (de Haan et al., 2012; Denissen et al., 2009; O'Connor & Dvorak, 2001; Prinzie et al., 2004; Reti et al., 2002). Different characteristics of parenting are influenced by various factors. For parental warmth, the personality characteristics of parents and children, as well as the characteristics of the family environment, are especially significant. Whereas for authoritarianism the most significant are family demographic parameters: parents' age and education, religiosity, etc. Protectiveness determined by a compilation of psychological and demographic parameters (Kendler et al., 1997).

Despite the evidence of close relationships between parenting and child personality, the direction of the detected correlations is not clear. Does the parenting style affect the child's personality or does child's personality cause certain parent-child interaction?

2. Problem Statement

Positive parent-child relationships are associated with positive outcomes. Children are less likely to have behavioral problems if they are raised in families with positive parent-child relationships (Manders et al., 2006).

If we summarize the data about associations between parenting and children's personality traits (in particular, the Big Five), then we can say that benevolence is positively associated with parental warmth and negatively with control (Denissen et al., 2009;; de Haan et al., 2012 Prinzie et al., 2004). Child consciousness positively related to parental support (O'Connor & Dvorak, 2001) and parental care (Reti et al., 2002) and negatively to parental control (O'Connor & Dvorak, 2001; Reti et al., 2002). Neuroticism is negatively associated with parental support and care and positively with control (O'Connor & Dvorak, 2001; Reti et al., 2002). Child extraversion associated with parental warmth (de Haan et al., 2012).

Since most studies focus on the investigation of parental influences (mainly maternal) on one child in a family, in our opinion, important to investigate parenting-child personality links in two-child families, taking into account the influences of gender and birth order. Promising is also the study of parenting using estimates of both the parents and the children.

3. Research Questions

The study addressed the following issues:

3.1. What children's personality traits are associated with parenting?

3.2. Are there any differences in the personality-parenting links, depending on which ratings are used?

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4. Purpose of the Study

The current study examined the associations between the child personality and parent-child relationships in two-child families.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Participants

Participants of the study were 316 two-child families. Mean age of the fathers 45.52 (SD=5.20); mothers – 43.07 (SD=4.2). Mean age of the older sibling was 18.04 (SD=2.27); of the younger sibling – 15.36 (SD=1.50). Intrapair age differences between siblings were not more, than 5 years.

5.2. Methods

Personality assessment. Parent and child personality was assessed with 57-items Russian version of Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI), which evaluate extraversion and neuroticism (Rusalov, 1992). Also, Locus of control scale was used to assess parent and child internality (Bazhin et al., 1993).

Parent-child relations assessment. Parents and children completed the self-administered Parent-Child Relationship Questionnaire. The Questionnaire contains two forms: for parents and children. Parents rated their relations with first-born and second-born sibling separately using a 5-point scale, and both siblings estimate their relationships with mother and father separately (Markovskaya, 2006). After factoring points, a factor structure was obtained for each version of the questionnaire (Alekseeva & Kozlova, 2010). The parent version contains 5 factors: Parental Positive Relations with Child, Control, Leniency, Inconsistency and Confidence. The children's version contains 3 factors: Parental Positive Relations with Child, Negative Control and Democracy.

An analysis of the results was conducted on the use of Spearman correlation analysis and Hierarchical regression analysis.

6. Findings

6.1. Child personality and parental assessment of parent-child relationships

Correlation analysis revealed that the child personality traits were more related to maternal assessments of parent-child relationships, especially for younger sibling. Maternal control positively correlated with the neuroticism of both children (0.17 for older sibling and 0.23 for younger sibling) and negatively linked to the younger sibling's internality (-0.24). The younger sibling's neuroticism negatively was correlated with maternal assessments of positive relations (-0.20) and confidence (-0.14) and positively with inconsistency (0.17). Also, the younger sibling's locus of control was positively correlated with both maternal and paternal positive relations with child (0.17), maternal confidence (0.18) and negatively with paternal control (-0.21).

Due to the fact that the correlation analysis revealed that child neuroticism and locus of control were the most related personality traits with the parent-child relationships, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to predict which parameter of parenting would predict child neuroticism and internality. At the first stage of hierarchical regression analysis, the following social demographic characteristics were used

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as independent variables: siblings' age, gender and age of their parents. At the second stage, these variables were complemented with parental assessments of parent-child relationships. It should be noted that paternal and maternal evaluations were examined independently of each other.

Hierarchical regression analysis showed that paternal assessments of parent-child relationships were not statistically significant predictors for siblings' neuroticism (Table 1). A significant confidence level was possessed only by primary models, which include, as independent variables, the gender and age of siblings, as well as the age of the parent. Gender was a statistically significant predictor for neuroticism of both siblings. The girls had higher levels of neuroticism than the boys.

Table 01. Hierarchical regression analysis for paternal assessments of parenting predicting siblings' neuroticism

Predictors	**Older sibling's neuroticism**			**Younger sibling's neuroticism**		
	ΔR^2	**ΔF**	**β**	**ΔR^2**	**ΔF**	**β**
Model 1	0.121**	10.141**		0.131**	10.218**	
Control variables1						
Model 2	0.002	0.221		0.038	1.798	
Father's age			0.024			0,.051
Child age			-0.059			-0.177*
Child gender			0.333**			0.323**
Paternal positive relations			-0.047			-0.213*
Paternal control			-0.020			0.029
Paternal leniency			-0.035			0.051
Paternal inconsistency			0.014			-0.021
Paternal confidence			0.061			0.044
Total R^2	0.123			0.169		

Note: Control variables included father's age, child age and child gender
* p < .05** p < .01

The inclusion of maternal assessments of parent-child relationships in the regression analysis made it possible to construct a significant model only for younger sibling's neuroticism: maternal control was a significant predictor for this characteristic (Table 2). As in the case of paternal models, primary models were well-fitting to statistical criteria. A significant predictor for neuroticism of older sibling was a gender. A significant predictor for younger sibling's neuroticism was gender and age. The use of regression analysis for child locus of control allowed us to build models that satisfy the statistical criteria of significance only for younger siblings. Primary models did not fit the level of statistical significance. Secondary models with the addition of both paternal and maternal assessments of parenting were significant. For younger siblings' locus of control significant predictors were control and confidence of parents, and maternal inconsistency.

Table 02. Hierarchical regression analysis for maternal assessments of parent-child relations predicting siblings' neuroticism

Predictors	**Older sibling's neuroticism**			**Younger sibling's neuroticism**		
	ΔR^2	**ΔF**	**β**	**ΔR^2**	**ΔF**	**β**
Model 1	0.111**	10.245**		0.134**	10.522**	
Control variables[1]						
Model 2	0.022	1,194		0.071**	3.562**	
Mother's age			-0.065			0.032

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Child age			0.040			-0.192**
Child gender			0.321**			0.336**
Maternal positive relations			-0.028			-0.141
Maternal control			0.109			0.174**
Maternal leniency			0.043			0.087
Maternal inconsistency			-0.033			0.043
Maternal confidence			-0.073			-0.062
Total R^2	0.133			0.205		

Note: Control variables included mother's age, child age and child gender.
* p < .05** p < .01

6.2. Child personality and child perception of parenting

Correlation analysis demonstrated that the neuroticism and locus of control were the most related traits to the child perception of parenting. Siblings' neuroticism was negatively correlated with the perception of parental positive relations (ranging from -0.14 to -0.23) and positively with the parental negative control (ranging from 0.21 to 0.26). Siblings' locus of control demonstrated an inverse pattern: it positively correlated with perception of parental positive relations (0.16 to 0.28) and negatively with parental negative control (-0.18 to 0.31). It should be noted that the revealed patterns of the associations between sibling evaluations of parenting and siblings' personality traits were very similar, regardless of older or younger sibling gives the assessment, and which of the parents is assessed - mother or father.

Hierarchical regression models, in which the sibling neuroticism was dependent variable, and the siblings' evaluations of paternal attitudes to children were independent variables, are presented in the Table 3. As with perception of maternal relation, paternal negative control was a significant predictor of neuroticism for both siblings. For older sibling, the neuroticism also was associated with paternal democracy.

Table 03. Hierarchical regression analysis for children's perception of paternal relation predicting siblings' neuroticism

Predictors	**Older sibling's neuroticism**			**Younger sibling's neuroticism**		
	ΔR^2	**ΔF**	**β**	**ΔR^2**	**ΔF**	**β**
Model 1	0.113**	17.460**		0.120**	15.638	
Control variables1						
Model 2	0.089**	10.055**		0.076**	11.022	
Child age			-0.024			-0.118
Child gender			0.348**			0.358**
Paternal positive relations			-0.109			-0.057
Paternal negative control			0.181*			0.215**
Paternal democracy			0.145*			-0.089
Total R^2	0.156			0.196		

Note: Control variables included father's age, child age and child gender.
* p < .05** p < .01

Hierarchical regression models were constructed in which the sibling neuroticism was a dependent variable, and the siblings' evaluations of maternal attitude towards children were used as an independent variables (Table 4). Primary and secondary models fit the criteria of statistical significance. It revealed that

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the gender and perception of maternal negative control were significant predictors for both siblings' neuroticism. Children who rated their mothers as being prescriptive and not accepting had higher rates of neuroticism.

Table 04. Hierarchical regression analysis for children's perception of maternal relation predicting siblings' neuroticism

Predictors	**Older sibling's neuroticism**			**Younger sibling's neuroticism**		
	ΔR^2	**ΔF**	**β**	**ΔR^2**	**ΔF**	**β**
Model 1	0.113**	17.460**		0.122**	15.942**	
Control variables1						
Model 2	0.046**	10.301**		0.057**	9.869**	
Child age			-0.008			-0.129*
Child gender			0.331**			0.342**
Maternal positive relations			-0.009			-0.086
Maternal negative control			0.227**			0.222*
Maternal Democracy			0.109			0.085
Total R^2	0.159			0.179		

Note: Control variables included mother's age, child age and child gender.
* p < .05** p < .01

The primary models for the siblings' locus of control did not reach the level of statistical significance. Models with sibling estimates of maternal relationships were statistically significant (Table 5). A significant predictor for both siblings is the assessment of maternal negative control. Children with low levels of internality rated maternal negative control higher.

Table 05. Hierarchical regression analysis for children's perception of maternal relation and siblings' locus of control

Predictors	**Older sibling's internality**			**Younger sibling's internality**		
	ΔR^2	**ΔF**	**β**	**ΔR^2**	**ΔF**	**β**
Model 1	0.001	0.190		0.021	2.434	
Control variables1						
Model 2	0.064**	3.720**		0.109**	6.760**	
Child age			-0.008			0.159*
Child gender			-0.005			-0.044
Maternal positive relations			-0.031			0.152*
Maternal negative control			-0.276**			-0.166*
Maternal Democracy			-0.027			0.101
Total R^2	0.065			0.130		

Note: Control variables included mother's age, child age and child gender.
* p < .05** p < .01

7. Conclusion

To analyze the relations between parenting and child personality, we used the estimates of both the parents and the children. We have found that child personality traits were more related to maternal assessments of parent-child relationships (especially for younger sibling) than to paternal. The younger sibling's neuroticism was negatively correlated with maternal assessments of positive relations and

confidence, and positively with inconsistency and control. The younger sibling's locus of control was positively correlated with both maternal and paternal positive relations with child, maternal confidence and negatively with paternal control.

Both parent and child assessments of parent-child relationships were associated with siblings' personality traits. However, it should be noted that sibling assessments of parent-child relationships were much more related to the children's' personality than parental assessments. Neuroticism and locus of control were the most related traits to the child perception of parenting. Siblings' neuroticism was negatively correlated with the perception of parental positive relations and positively with the parental negative control. Siblings' locus of control demonstrated an inverse pattern: it positively correlated with perception of parental positive relations and negatively with parental negative control.

Hierarchical regression analysis showed that parental negative control was a significant predictor for neuroticism and locus of control of both siblings. Children evaluating high parental negative control had higher scores for neuroticism and lower scores for locus of control.

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