

Association Between Mothers' Personality and Patterns of Maternal Child Relationship

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Abstract: The purpose of the current study was to examine the association between five factors mothers' personality and four patterns of Maternal Child Relationship (MCR) included acceptance, overprotection, overindulgence and rejection. A cross-sectional study was conducted from April to December 2015 in women who referred to Family Physician Centers and Pediatric Clinic of Razi Hospital in Ghaemshahr city. Two hundred women, who had education at least 5 years had at least a baby more than 9 months age and willingness to participate the study were included. The subjects filled two questionnaires; Mother-Child Relationship Evaluation (MCRE) and NEO-FFI, during the physician visit in the clinics. There was negative significant correlation between overindulgence and all factors of mothers' personality included neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. There was no significant relationship between three other patterns of MCR (acceptance, overprotection and rejection) and five factors of the personality. In regression models, neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness explained 10, 5, 14, 10 and 17% the variance of the overindulgence pattern of MCR, respectively. The results support the idea that mothers' personalities are exclusively predicted overindulgence pattern of MCR.

Key words: Extroversion, relationship, factors, personality, openness

INTRODUCTION

A successful and confident maternal child relationship is the great importance in terms of making the child adapt to life. The quality of maternal child relationship is a quite effective factor for personality development of the child (Eryavuz, 2006). Previous studies have shown that various factors have an effect on the relation of mother and child. These factors include family structure (size and culture), social-economical status, broken family, mother's age, educational status of mother, working status of mother, number of children, children's characteristics, gender of child and birth order (Sahin, 2014). Mother attitudes are the other of great important factors in the personality development of the child. Mother with an authoritative attitude take every decision regarding the child and make the child obey the rules is pressure and punishment. Mother with protective attitude is interested in their children at an excessive level. Mother with inattentive attitude neglect the child and basic needs. Mothers with democratic attitude encourage their children to make some decisions in line with the age, values the ideas of the child (Shahin, 2014; Ogetir and

Demiriz, 2009). There are relationship between parents' personalities and parenting styles. The five-factor structure of personality have been labeled as; neuroticism (nervous, touchy, anxious, depressed and insecure), extraversion (frequency and quality of interpersonal contact and activity level), Conscientiousness (self-discipline and act dutifully), Agreeableness (to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious) and Openness (understanding for art, emotion, imagination, curiosity and variety of experience) (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Marc reported that five personality factors related to 35% of parenting cognitions and 10% of parenting practices. A study reported that high levels of neuroticism were related to expressing negative affect towards the child and agreeableness were correlated with low levels of both detachment and negative affect (Clark *et al.*, 2000). Mothers who scored high score on either neuroticism or extraversion were more controlling and forceful in their relationship with children (Clark *et al.*, 2000). Also, Koenig *et al.* (2010) reported that mothers with higher neuroticism score engaged in less positive parenting, regardless of the children's temperament. Belsky and Barends (2002) showed that

parent with high extraversion appears to be characterized by authoritative parenting (Belsky and Barends, 2002). On the other hands, conscientiousness of parent was related to higher levels of supportive parenting and less negative control (Losoya *et al.*, 1997). However, a study reported that agreeableness mothers have been increased coercion with the child (Prinz *et al.*, 2004). Desjardins *et al.* (2008) found that openness to experience of parent were associated to parental nurturance. A study reported maternal neuroticism and agreeableness was positively correlated and maternal conscientiousness was negatively correlated with children's behavior problems (Lauren and Schaefer, 2015). As factors of personality describe stable beliefs and behaviors and influence interpersonal relationships (Ozer and Benet-Martinez, 2006) we expected maternal personality to influence maternal child relationship. Although, there is some research in relationship of personality with healthy status in Iranian population (Faramarzi *et al.*, 2012, 2013), studies that connect five factors maternal personality to four types of MCR included acceptance, overprotection, overindulgence and rejection have not been addressed sufficiently. In addition, the use of different measurement instrument becomes an originality of this study. Therefore, we hypothesized that five factors of maternal personality would be related to four types of maternal child relationship.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross-sectional study was conducted from April to December 2015 in women who referred to Family Physician Centers and Pediatric clinic of Razi Hospital in Ghaemshahr city. Two hundred women participated in the study. Available sampling was utilized to recruit the women. Inclusion criteria for the women were: having education of at least 5 years having at least a baby >9 months age and willingness to participate in the study. All aspects of this protocol were approved by the Humanistic Science Committee of Islamic Azad University of Sari. A researcher interviewed the subjects. He took the history and completed the checklist of the study. He collected demographic data including age, education and job. Then, the researcher distributed the two questionnaires included Mother-Child Relationship Evaluation (MCRE) and NEO-FFI to the respondents during the visit. He gave a brief explanation regarding the purpose of the study and how to fill in the scales. The women were also told that their information would be treated with utmost confidentiality. The questionnaires took only 20 min to be complete.

Questionnaires

The Mother-Child Relationship Evaluation (MCRE): This scale was developed by Roth. MCRE has been created to measure parental attitudes toward the child and childrearing practices including acceptance, overprotection, overindulgence and rejection. It consisted of 48 items. Responses of the MCRE are on a three point scale ranging from 1 (very low)-5 (very much). Split-half reliability coefficients ranged from 0.41-0.57 for the four factors. Validity of inter-correlations between the scales ranged from 0.68-0.28. We used valid Persian MCRE in this study (Zamiri, 2004).

NEO-Five Factors Inventory (NEO-FFI): Maternal personality was examined through the use of the five-factors model of personality questionnaire. This valid scale contains 60 questions that assess five aspects of personality included neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Neuroticism is the tendency to anxious, generally apprehensive and prone to worry; extraversion is the tendency to be very warm and affectionate toward others and enjoy large and crowds; openness is the tendency to be generally open, imaginary and fantasy; agreeableness is the tendency to have sympathy for others and easily trusts others and conscientiousness is the tendency to be organized, purposeful and self-discipline. Answers were rated on a 4-point Likert scale. Scores on each subscales ranged from 0-48 (McCrae and Costa, 1992). Valid Persian NEO-FFI was used in this study (Kiamehr, 2002).

Statistical analysis: The frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to describe the demographic data of the subjects. We used Pearson correlation coefficient between the scores of five factors of maternal personality and four type's of MCR. We carried out five series regression analyses. Five variables included neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness were used as independent variables and overindulgence formed the independent variable. We applied SPSS Version 18.0 for data analysis. A value of $p < 0.05$ was considered significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 show that 46.5% of the women were in the age group of 20-30 years. 50% of the subjects had academic education. 19% of the population was employee. Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviations of five factors of mother's personality and four patterns of MCR. The mean of the neuroticism was the least scores among

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample

| Variables | N (%) |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Age (years) | |
| 20-30 | 93(46.5) |
| 31-40 | 66(33.0) |
| 41-50 | 41(20.5) |
| Education (years) | |
| ≤12 | 100(50.0) |
| >12 | 100(50.0) |
| Job | |
| Employee | 38(19.0) |
| Unemployee | 162(81.0) |

Table 2: Mean and standard deviations of the variables

| Variables | Mean (SD) |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Neuroticism | 20.62 (7.19) |
| Extraversion | 23.38 (7.53) |
| Openness | 22.51 (6.20) |
| Agreeableness | 25.75 (8.30) |
| Conscientiousness | 28.37 (8.70) |
| Acceptance | 25.96 (7.18) |
| Overprotection | 27.42 (5.05) |
| Overindulgence | 31.06 (7.18) |
| Rejection | 26.12 (5.05) |

Score ranges: Neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness: 0-48. Acceptance, overprotection, overindulgence and rejection: 12-60

the characteristics of the personality. The mean of the overindulgence was the highest scores among the four patterns MCR. Pearson correlation test (Table 3) showed that there was negative significant correlation between overindulgence and five factors of maternal personality included neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. There was no significant relationship between three patterns of MCR (acceptance, overprotection and rejection) and five factors of the maternal personality. Also, subscale of acceptance of MCR had only positive significant relationship with openness personality. The results of linear analysis regressions are presented in Tables 4. These findings reveals that neuroticism, personality explained 10% of the variance overindulgence. Extroversion personality explained 5% the variance of the overindulgence. Also, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness explained 14, 10 and 17% the variance of the overindulgence, respectively. Our findings showed that five factors of mothers' personality, namely neuroticism, extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness were related negatively to levels of only one pattern of MCR namely overindulgence. Whereas neuroticism, extroversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness were not associated with three patterns of MCR namely acceptance, rejection and overprotection.

The findings for neuroticism are in line with some previous research. Neuroticism is related to less parental warmth (Kendler *et al.*, 1997). Oppenheimer *et al.* (2013)

found that parents with low levels of neuroticism exhibited greater sensitive responsiveness and warmth. Prinzie *et al.* (2004) found that high level of neuroticism is associated with more strict control. Although family support has important predictor of the psychological problem (Faramarzi and Pasha, 2015), in future studies, this may explain why neurotic mothers are more likely to engage in indulgent (uninvolved) parenting. However, neurotic mothers may be very worry to know knowledge about their children (Prinzie *et al.*, 2004). With respect to extraversion, its previously reported failed association with supportiveness was confirmed (Kendler *et al.*, 1997). In contrast with our results, some studies reported positive correlations between extraversion and positive support (Losoya *et al.*, 1997; Belsky and Barends, 2002). Also, Kochanska *et al.* (2003) and Smith (2010) reported that higher levels of extraversion were related to more maternal power assertion or control.

Our results about association between agreeableness and overindulge is in agreement with the findings of previous research which suggested that extraverted parents raised their children in a more positive manner (Belsky and Barends, 2002). In contrast with our findings, some studies reported that agreeable mothers to be more satisfied with their parenting and more sensitive and affectionate with their children (Kochanska *et al.*, 1997; Smith, 2010). As regards openness, our founding is in line with some previous research. Huver *et al.* (2010) reported that openness was not related to parenting styles. Some reports is in disagreement with our founding (Clark *et al.*, 2000; Losoya *et al.*, 1997). The findings for conscientiousness are in line with some previous research. Previous studies reported that conscientious mothers are not power assertive and negatively controlling (Clark *et al.*, 2000; Smith *et al.*, 2007). However, conscientiousness might relate to parenting in complex ways. Extreme maternal levels of conscientiousness may place too many demands on young children and thus conscientiousness could be linked with over-controlling behaviors (Belsky and Barends, 2002).

The important question is how of the four patterns of MCR, only one pattern had negative relationship with five factors of mothers' personality. This reason is attributable to the nature of both the population and nature of the MCRE instrument. First, previous studies used various instruments in to identify parenting styles and practices. There has been a vast amount of research used Baumrind's parenting styles including authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting styles (Luver *et al.*, 2010; Lauren, 2015). There has been few published study to use MCRE in relationship with five factors of personality (Sahin, 2014). Second, this finding

Table 3: Correlation coefficients between NEO-FFI and MCRE

| Variables | Neuroticism | Extraversion | Openness | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness |
|----------------|-------------|--------------|----------|---------------|-------------------|
| Acceptance | 0.1150 | 0.095 | 0.195* | 0.058 | -0.138 |
| Rejection | 0.0780 | 0.058 | 0.086 | 0.046 | 0.012 |
| Overprotection | -0.0150 | 0.045 | -0.078 | -0.080 | -0.083 |
| Overindulgence | -0.0267** | -0.170* | -0.256** | -0.310** | -0.40** |

*p<0.05; **p<0.001

Table 4: Results of analysis regression of overindulgence and personality of women

| Variables | R | R ² | SS | MS | F | p-values |
|-------------------|-------|----------------|---------|--------|------|----------|
| Neuroticism | 0.109 | 0.091 | 1122.92 | 280.73 | 5.96 | 0.000 |
| Extraversion | 0.058 | 0.038 | 652.02 | 163.00 | 2.98 | 0.020 |
| Openness | 0.145 | 0.128 | 1109.12 | 277.28 | 8.28 | 0.000 |
| Agreeableness | 0.102 | 0.084 | 1407.31 | 351.85 | 5.56 | 0.000 |
| Conscientiousness | 0.170 | 0.153 | 2561.45 | 640.38 | 9.97 | 0.000 |

may be due to population differences in mean of five factors personality. Our mothers' population had the lowest mean scores in neurotic factors. Another possibility is that differences in normal distribution of the MCR may have influenced on relationship of NEO- FPI personality and MCRE. Our mothers' population had the highest mean scores in overindulging pattern of MCRE. Third, overindulgence is term of parenting style that was not used mostly in previous study. Overindulgence MCR is a form of child neglect. Mothers with overindulging behaviors is giving children very much of what looks good, very soon, very long. These mothers expose children with experiences that are not appropriate for their interests or talents. It is the process of giving things to child to meet the adult's needs, not the children's needs (Clarke *et al.*, 2000). This study had a number of limitations. First, the categorization of MCR such as the one used in the present study restricts variance in treating participants as high or low. Second we only identified the relationship in s case-control study. Thus, no causal relationship can be confirmed. Prospective cohort studies would be a more reliable way of related various mothers' personality and MCR. Third, data collection was performed by self-report using questionnaires which could result in underreporting of the maternal child relationship. Future research might include a more detailed and complete view on MCR which in particular, might be obtained by using alternative methods such as observation or parents' interviews. Despite lack of support for the proposed hypotheses and some limitations, this study did contribute several new and likely robust findings. Our finding was the marginally significant inverse relationship between five factors of mothers' personality and MCR pattern of overindulgence with routines. Future studies should examine this negative relationship to obtain more confirmation for the development of an intervention study. Similarly, it was no observed relationship between neuroticism, extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness with protection, acceptance or reject MCR.

CONCLUSION

All of the five aspects of mothers' personality included neuroticism, extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness were related negatively to levels MCR pattern of overindulgence. Whereas five aspects of mothers' personality were not associated with three other patterns of MCR included acceptance, rejection and overprotection. In general, the results support the idea that mothers' personalities are exclusively predicted overindulgence pattern of MCR.

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