



Happy mother, happy child? Maternal role satisfaction affects parenting, child emotional development, and life satisfaction

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Abstract

Being satisfied in the maternal role and feeling self-efficient as a mother has considerable impact on the quality of parenting and the child's psychosocial adjustment. The present study aims to investigate whether early maternal role satisfaction has implications on parenting style as well as on children's development, including emotion regulation and life satisfaction across an 11-year period. Moreover, we assume bidirectional effects between emotional problems of the child and emotional warm parenting style of the mother. Survey-data from the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) with a total of 6 measurement points (T1 – T6) across 11 years were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The study sample consisted of 251 mothers and their children. Mothers completed questionnaires to assess their early maternal role satisfaction (T1, corresponds age 1 of the child), parenting style (T4, age 8), children's emotion regulation (T1 and T2, age 1 and 3), and children's emotional problems (T3 and T5, age 6 and 10). At age 12 (T6), children self-reported their life satisfaction. Early maternal role satisfaction (age 1) had positive, long-term implications for emotional warm parenting style (age 8) and children's emotion regulation (age 1 and 3). Furthermore, less maternal role satisfaction (age 1) predicted increased children's emotional problems nine years later. Moreover, results revealed an indirect positive effect of maternal role satisfaction on children's subjective life satisfaction at age 12 (via parenting). In addition, children's emotion regulation (age 3) predicted less emotional problems three years later. However, data did not support our hypotheses on bidirectional effects between children's emotional problems and mother's emotional warm parenting style. We extended prior literature by focusing on positive aspects of maternal well-being, e. g. role satisfaction, and analyzing its positive longitudinal effects on parenting and child outcomes throughout childhood.

Keywords: maternal role satisfaction, parenting style, emotion regulation, emotional symptoms, youth life satisfaction, German Socio-Economic Panel Study, SOEP