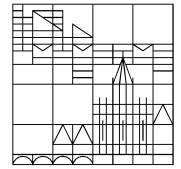


Happy Mother, Happy Child?

Maternal Role Satisfaction Affects Parenting, Child Emotional Development, and Life Satisfaction



THEORETICAL BACKGROUND and HYPOTHESES

Being satisfied in the maternal role and feeling self-efficient as a mother enhances the quality of parenting and the child's psychosocial adjustment. However, longitudinal research on the topic of maternal well-being and satisfaction is rare^{1, 2, 3}. We extend prior literature by investigating whether early maternal role satisfaction impacts both parenting and child development and satisfaction positively. Moreover, based on previous research^{4, 5}, we assume bidirectional effects between parenting style and child emotional development. Furthermore, it is expected that both emotional warm parenting style and the absence of emotional symptoms during childhood have positive effects on youth life satisfaction.

Table 1. Overview: 11 Years of Data Collection.

Measurement Point	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
Collected Data	Maternal Role Satisfaction Emotion Regulation	Emotion Regulation	Emotional Symptoms	Emotional Warm Parenting Style	Emotional Symptoms	Life Satisfaction
Respondent	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother	Child
Age of the Child in months	$M = 7.6$ ($SD = 3.8$)	$M = 33.1$ ($SD = 3.8$)	$M = 69.0$ ($SD = 3.8$)	$M = 93.0$ ($SD = 3.9$)	$M = 116.7$ ($SD = 3.6$)	$M = 141.0$ ($SD = 3.7$)
Year of Data Collection (3 waves)	2003, 2004, 2005	2005, 2006, 2007	2008, 2009, 2010	2010, 2011, 2012	2012, 2013, 2014	2014, 2015, 2016

METHOD

Data were collected by the German Institute for Economic Research, the DIW Berlin. The German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) is a wide-ranging representative longitudinal study of private households in Germany⁶. Using structural equation modeling, we analyzed data which were obtained between 2003 and 2016⁷; 3 waves of in sum $N = 251$ mother-child-dyads were followed for 11 years with a total of 6 measurement points (T1 – T6), see Table 1. 126 (50.2%) children were female.

MOTHER and CHILD RELATED MEASURES

Maternal Role Satisfaction: 5 items referring to satisfaction, self-efficacy and level of perceived energy in the first year after bearing a child; e.g. Bringing up my child provides happiness (recoded). From 1 (*agree completely*) to 4 (*disagree completely*).

Emotional Warm Parenting Style: 3 items indicating the degree of positive attention and care in parenting; e.g. I show my child with words and gestures that I care about him/her. From 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*frequently*).

Emotion Regulation: 3 items; e.g. How do you see your child today: My child is easily irritated and cries frequently. From 1 (*applies fully*) to 4 (*does not apply at all*).

Emotional Symptoms: assessed with 3 items of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman); e.g. My child is often unhappy or dejected. From 1 (*does not apply at all*) to 7 (*applies completely*).

Life Satisfaction: measured with a single item; How satisfied are you with your life, all things considered? From 0 (*completely dissatisfied*) to 10 (*completely satisfied*).

Control Variables: After conducting correlational analyses to get information about relevant controls, we controlled 'emotional warm parenting style' for 'child's sex' ($r = .17, p = .01$) and 'child's life satisfaction' for 'socio-economic status (SES)' of the respective year ($r = -.12, p = .06$). SES was based on ISEI (Standard International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status) and considered income, occupation and education from 16 (low SES) to 90 (high SES); $M = 45.86$; $SD = 16.66$.

Table 2. Sample Characteristics of Researched Variables.

Variable	Min	Max	M	SD	α
Mother Related Variables:					
Maternal Role Satisfaction	1.8	4	3.36	.47	.71
Emotional Warm Parenting Style	3.33	5	4.65	.39	.65
Child Related Variables:					
Emotion Regulation in Infancy	1.33	4	3.57	.48	.73
Emotion Regulation at Age 3	1.67	4	3.45	.45	.56
Emotional Symptoms at Age 6	3	19	7.81	3.64	.65
Emotional Symptoms at Age 10	3	20	7.71	3.62	.65
Life Satisfaction at Age 12	0	10	8.27	1.78	-

RESULTS

See Figure 1 for the results of the SEM analyses.

Concerning the SEM methodology, weak measurement invariance holds for the construct of 'emotion regulation'; evidence of strong measurement invariance was obtained for the construct of 'emotional symptoms'.

Although the chi-square for the model was significant, $\chi^2(215) = 293.025, p < .01$, alternative fit indices indicated a good fit to the data, CFI = .922 (good fit > approx .95), SRMR = .061 (good fit < .08), and RMSEA = .038 (good fit < .06).

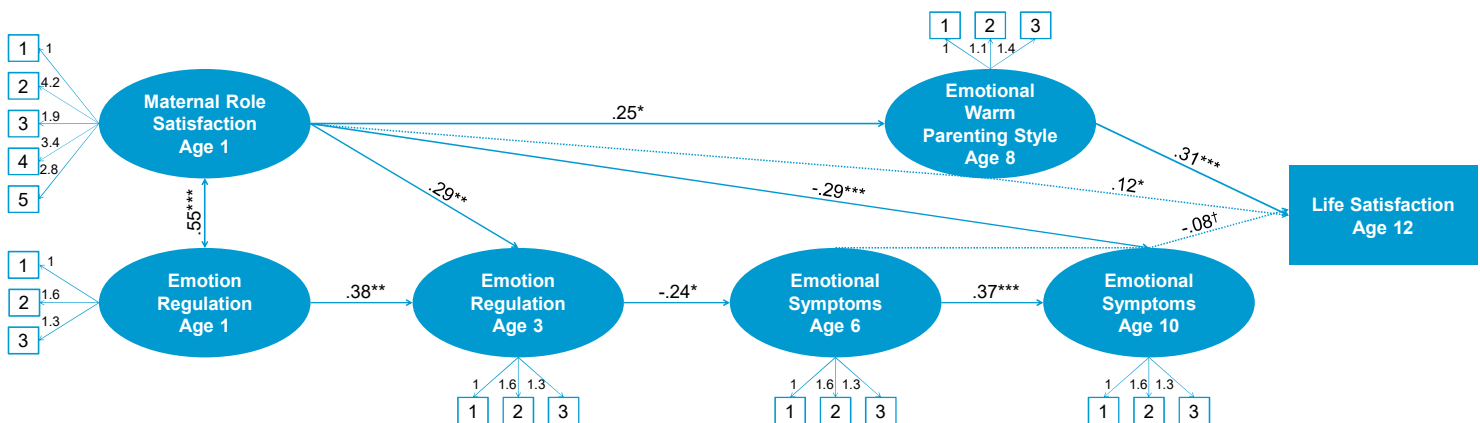


Figure 1. Structural equation model with control variables. Black lines indicate significant direct effects, dotted lines indicate significant indirect effects. Printed path estimates are standardized β -coefficients; $^{\dagger}p < .1$, $^*p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

As expected, results revealed significant effects of early maternal role satisfaction on effective parenting as well as emotional adjustment and life satisfaction of children – from infancy to early adolescence. Moreover, an emotional warm parenting style was a determinant of youth life satisfaction. However, data did not support our hypotheses on bidirectional effects between parenting and child outcomes.

Using measures of maternal satisfaction and well-being and analyzing their effects on family and child compared to measuring symptoms of distress and mental illness in future research is important and needed. According to Brajša-Zganec and Hanzec⁸, analyzing positive factors that contribute to positive outcomes may help in developing methods aiming to promote these factors, whereas identifying and understanding negative factors may contribute to their prevention.

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