

Relation Between Marital Adjustment and Parenting: The Moderating Effect of Children's Temperament

Authors : Ester Ato, Maria Angeles Fernández-Vilar, Maria Dolores Galián

Abstract : The aim of this work was to analyze the relation between children's effortful control, marital adjustment and parenting practices in a sample of 345 Spanish children aged between 6 and 8 years. Traditionally, the literature confirms that a higher level of marital conflict has been associated with less effective and less positive parenting, but there are few studies that include the effect that children's effortful control exert to this relation. To measure marital adjustment, parenting practices and children's temperament, parents were given the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT), the Spanish version of the PCRI (Parent-Child Relationship Inventory), and the TMCQ (Temperament in Middle Childhood Questionnaire). The results confirmed that higher marital satisfaction predicted more positive parenting practices, whereas lower marital adjustment scores predicted less parenting support and control. Using a statistical modeling approach, we tested a moderation model that revealed the moderating role of effortful control in the relation between marital adjustment and parenting. Concretely, higher marital satisfaction predicts higher parenting communication and involvement, but only in children with low levels of effortful control. Therefore, a difficult temperament interferes in a less negative way in the family system when parents are satisfied and united. And a better self-regulated child predicts more effective parenting practice regardless of the parents' marital satisfaction. The clinical implications of the present findings should be considered. Specifically, difficult children must be detected and evaluated in community settings, such as school or community programs, in order to take into account the marital adjustment and parenting practices of their parents, and to be able to design adequate family interventions and prevent future pathologizing patterns.

Keywords : effortful control, marital adjustment, parenting, moderation

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