

Perceived Parenting Style and Self-Concept of Slovak Pubescent Youth

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Abstract

The research study focuses on verification of the relationship between individual components of parenting and pubescent self-concept. The aim is also to examine gender differences in perceived parenting and self-concept in pubescent youth. It is a correlation-comparative study with the research sample consisting of 119 pubescent youth aged 11–15. Research tools: the Parenting Style Questionnaire (Čáp & Boschek) and the Piers-Harris Children's and Adolescents' Self-Concept Scale 2. Research results allow for stating that perceived parenting significantly correlates with pubescent self-concept. Gender differences in perceived parenting appear only in mothers, in the negative emotional component and in the component of demands, with girls scoring significantly higher. A gender difference in favour of boys can be stated in the overall pubescent self-concept.

Key words: *self-concept, pubescence, parenting, parenting components*

Introduction

According to Piers (as cited in Obereignerů et al., 2015), self-concept is a relatively stable set of self-attitudes reflecting both a description and evaluation of one's own behaviour and attributes. Campbell et al. (2003) conceptualize self-concept as an organized collection of ideas that a person has about himself/ herself. Baumeister (1995) defines self-concept as a total organized body of information that any given person has about himself/herself.

Anyway, self-concept of an individual is a result of long-term personality development, with a number of factors, people, situations and experiences involved in its formation. The central role, however, is played by people who are the individual's caregivers and who convey the surrounding world to him/her. By way of how they filter stimuli from the surrounding environment, interpret to the child his/her first experiences, small successes, failures, by their expectations and especially by their feedback they are involved, in a crucial way, in the formation of the child's self-image in early childhood. The foundations of self-perception are built on the parental approach. The child's significant others rear him/her, influence him/her, guide his/her development, and can bring him/her to self-assurance, self-confidence, as well as to feelings of insufficiency or even inferiority. It is not only parents who participate in the development of evaluation criteria in children, but also significant persons from their surroundings the children come into contact with: teachers, grandparents or other family members.

The period of puberty belongs to the most complicated stages in the individual's development. Now the young person becomes interested in questions of his/her identity, attempts to define him/herself in relation to other people, as well as parents. He/she is no longer a child, but not an adult yet. It is the curiosity and the urgency of these questions that motivates him/her to increased self-observation, effort to find out *who I am and what I am like*. Self-esteem and self-concept change not only depending on age, but also depending on the development of cognitive abilities, experience and one's own interpretation. The level of self-esteem changes through the effect of physical and hormonal changes as well as through the effect of the social sphere – feedback and comparison with others. At the beginning of puberty (about 11–12 years of age) a sharp and temporary decline in the level of self-worth is described (Muldoon, 2000). With the increasing age, self-concept becomes more differentiated (Harter, 2006). Therefore, it is not sufficient to explore the so-called global self-concept, its investigation should take into consideration important variations in its emotional, academic, social and behavioural domains (DuBois & Tevendale, 1999). Pubescent youth aged 12–13 are the most insecure-feeling group, with deeper feelings of insecurity recorded in girls (Beal, 1994).

Parenting style (Darling & Steinberg, 1993) is considered a characteristic of the parent that is stable over time and constitutes the environmental and emotional context for child rearing and socialization. According to Anderson (2011), parenting style involves the emotional climate and psychological constructs involved in the strategies used to raise children. Baumrid's (as cited in Yazdani & Daryei, 2016) original two-dimensional model of parenting factors (warmth and control) brought three major parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive and authoritative.

Authoritative parents have high demands on their children's maturity and self-control, while showing a high level of sensitivity, emotional warmth and involvement. According to the study by Yazdani & Daryei, the more authoritative the parenting style, the higher the children's self-esteem.

In our conditions, the established model of parenting styles (Čáp & Boschek, 1994) corresponds with the above. Parenting style within this concept, namely, includes the emotional relationship of parents to the child and parental control, made up by the combination of freedom and parental demands towards the child. The child's personality development benefits the best from a positive emotional relationship in combination with moderate parental control. Its effects are beneficial mainly to conscientiousness and purposefulness in children. It has a favourable influence also on children's appropriate self-evaluation and stability of their personality. The opposite, i.e., children's instability and impaired self-concept, reduced conscientiousness and persistence, is caused by a strong negative emotional relationship combined mostly with contradictory control.

Our research study is based on work focused on a correlation between parenting style and children's or adolescents' self-esteem. For instance, Hajná & Stránka (2011) have found out that it is the children from families with a prevailing extremely positive emotional relationship who have the highest self-esteem. Also, Valihorová & Gallo (2014) have stated that families with a prevailing positive emotional relationship between parents and children have a favourable influence on the children's self-evaluation. Correlations between the perceived parenting style and adolescent self-esteem have been also verified by Vanager (2012).

Thus, the main goal of our research activity was to verify the perceived parenting style as a possible source of self-concept in pubescent children. Our specific objectives were to:

- 1) verify connections between individual parenting style components in Čáp & Boschek's conception (1994) and the pubescent overall self-concept by the Piers-Harris Scale (Obereignerů et al., 2015);
- 2) find out gender differences, if any, in the overall self-concept of Slovak pubescent youth, as well as in their perception of individual parenting style components.

Research Methodology

The research was carried out in two elementary schools in Banská Bystrica. Selective and convenience sampling were used in the research project implemen-

tation. The research sample consisted of 119 elementary school pubescent youth aged 11–15 ($AM = 13.55$), including 77 boys (64.70%) and 42 girls (35.30%).

The following research tools were used:

1) The Parenting Style Questionnaire (Čáp & Boschek, 1994)

The questionnaire summarizes statements of children and adolescents assessing behaviour and attitudes of their parents toward them. The questionnaire has 40 items, 10 for each of the four components of parenting, with the child assessing mother and father separately: Positive Emotional Relationship ($\alpha = .863/.748$), Negative Emotional Relationship ($\alpha = .782/.810$), Component of Freedom ($\alpha = .729/.735$), Component of Demands ($\alpha = .765/.767$)

2) The Piers-Harris Children's and Adolescents' Self-Concept Scale 2 (Ober-eigerů et al., 2015)

The questionnaire, with the subtitle *How I Perceive Myself*, has 60 items, is intended for children and youth aged 9–18. It includes 6 subscales evaluating specific domains of self-concept. They are Behavioral Adjustment (BEH, $\alpha = .756$), Intellectual and School Status (INT, $\alpha = .770$), Physical Appearance (PHY, $\alpha = .778$), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE, $\alpha = .829$), Popularity (POP, $\alpha = .760$), and Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP, $\alpha = .765$). The sum of the subscales yields a total score (TOT).

Obtained data were processed by the statistical program SPSS using the procedures of descriptive and inductive statistics.

Research Results

First, the data were tested for the distribution normality of the variables studied (Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test). Our data did not meet the condition of normal distribution ($p \leq 0.162$). Thus, a non-parametric correlation procedure as well as a non-parametric alternative of a 2-sample t-test were used. Table 1 shows basic descriptive indicators of the correlated variables, Table 2 presents descriptive characteristics of the variables in groups by the respondents' gender.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the variables studied ($N = 119$)

	AM	MEDIAN	SD	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
KEK_O	25.13	26.00	4.517	11	30
ZEK_O	14.29	13.00	3.994	10	28
KV_O	19.04	19.00	3.248	11	28

	AM	MEDIAN	SD	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
KP_O	16.92	16.00	3.467	11	27
KEK_M	25.99	26.00	3.416	14	30
ZEK_M	15.40	14.00	4.503	10	28
KV_M	19.25	19.00	3.632	10	27
KP_M	18.21	18.00	4.172	11	30
TOT	40.16	42.00	10.435	17	59

KEK_O – Positive Emotional Component father, ZEK_O – Negative Emotional Component father, KV_O – Freedom Component father, KP_O – Demands Component father, KEK_M – Positive Emotional Component mother, ZEK_M – Negative Emotional Component mother, KV_M – Freedom Component mother, KP_M – Demands Component mother, TOT – Overall Self-Concept, SD – standard deviation

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the variables studied by gender
(boys N = 77, girls N = 42)

	AM		MEDIAN		SD		MINIMUM		MAXIMUM	
	CH	D	CH	D	CH	D	CH	D	CH	D
KEK_O	25.39	24.64	27.00	26.00	4.574	4.422	11	14	30	30
ZEK_O	13.91	14.98	13.00	13.00	3.664	4.502	10	10	26	28
KV_O	19.17	18.81	19.00	19.00	2.904	3.827	11	11	28	28
KP_O	17.01	16.76	16.00	16.00	3.435	3.560	11	11	26	27
KEK_M	26.31	25.40	26.00	26.00	3.014	4.025	17	14	30	30
ZEK_M	14.52	17.02	13.00	16.00	3.929	5.058	10	11	24	28
KV_M	19.92	18.02	19.00	18.00	3.132	4.170	14	10	27	25
KP_M	17.49	19.52	17.00	19.00	3.956	4.284	12	11	30	30
TOT	41.91	36.95	43.00	34.50	9.947	10.661	17	21	59	56
BEH	10.29	10.12	11.00	11.00	2.924	2.965	0	4	14	14
INT	9.99	9.50	10.00	9.50	3.636	3.590	1	2	11	11
PHY	7.12	6.19	7.00	6.00	2.861	2.778	1	2	11	11
FRE	10.13	7.40	11.00	8.00	3.160	3.623	1	1	14	14
POP	8.53	7.64	9.00	8.00	3.160	2.904	1	1	12	11
HAP	8.09	6.86	9.00	7.00	1.988	2.637	3	0	10	10

KEK_O – Positive Emotional Component father, ZEK_O – Negative Emotional Component father, KV_O – Freedom Component father, KP_O – Demands Component father, KEK_M – Positive Emotional Component mother, ZEK_M – Negative Emotional Component mother, KV_M – Freedom Component mother, KP_M – Demands Component mother, TOT – Overall Self-Concept, BEH – Behavioural Adjustment, INT – Intellectual and School Status, PHY – Appearance, FRE – Freedom from Anxiety, POP – Popularity, HAP – Happiness and Satisfaction, AM – mean, SD – standard deviation, CH – boys, D – girls

In line with the first research objective, connection was verified between the perceived parenting style components in both the parents' and pubescent youth's overall self-concept. As indicated by the results (Table 3), the positive emotional component was in a positive moderate statistically significant relation to child self-concept. In turn, the negative emotional component in both parents was in a negative moderate statistically significant relation to the pubescent youth's self-concept.

As to the parental control dimension, only the demands component in both parents was related to self-concept. It was a weak negative statistically significant correlation. No connection between child self-concept and the freedom component appeared in our research sample.

Table 3. Correlation analysis of relationships between the pubescent youth's overall self-concept (TOT) and parenting components for both parents (N = 119)

	Self-Concept (TOT)	
	P	Significance
Positive Emotional Component_father	.431	.000
Negative Emotional Component_father	-.538	.000
Freedom Component_father	.053	.569
Demands Component_father	-.252	.006
Positive Emotional Component_mother	.402	.000
Negative Emotional Component_mother	-.478	.000
Freedom Component_mother	-.069	.458
Demands Component_mother	-.296	.001

In line with our second research objective, the variables studied were tested for possible gender differences. The Mann-Whitney U-test showed statistically significant differences between the boys and girls in the perception of mother, this in the negative emotional component and in the demands component, in both cases in favour of the girls (Table 4). In addition, also a statistically significant gender difference appeared in the pubescent youth's overall self-concept in favour of the boys. This made us test also individual self-concept dimensions. Results summarized in Table 5 show that there were statistically significant gender differences only in two subscales, i.e., the freedom from anxiety (FRE) and the happiness and satisfaction (HAP), in both cases, of course, in favour of the boys.

Table 4. Gender differences in perceived parenting components for both parents' and pubescent youth's overall self-concept

	p - value								
	KEK_O	ZEK_O	KV_O	KP_O	KEK_M	ZEK_M	KV_M	KP_M	TOT
CH (n=77)	.261	.213	.538	.561	.387	.008**	.15	.007**	.016*
D (n=42)									

CH – boys, D – girls; ** $p \leq .01$ * $p \leq .05$

KEK_O – Positive Emotional Component father, ZEK_O – Negative Emotional Component father, KV_O – Freedom Component father, KP_O – Demands Component father, KEK_M – Positive Emotional Component mother, ZEK_M – Negative Emotional Component mother, KV_M – Freedom Component mother, KP_M – Demands Component mother, TOT – Overall Self-Concept

Table 5. Gender differences in self-concept domains by the Piers and Harris Scale

	p - value					
	BEH	INT	PHY	FRE	POP	HAP
Boys (n=77)	.758	.443	.066	.000**	.092	.024*
Girls (n=42)						

** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$

BEH – Behavioural Adjustment, INT – Intellectual and School Status, PHY – Physical Appearance, FRE – Freedom from Anxiety, POP – Popularity, HAP – Happiness and Satisfaction

Discussion

It seems that the corner-stone of parenting style lies in parents' emotional relationship expressions, the essence of which is the consistency between the parent's inner experiencing and his/her outward behaviour. We can observe how parents communicate with the child, whether there are visible expressions of love for the child, how the daily regime works in family, whether and with what intensity parents assign tasks and control their performance.

The emotional relationship of parents to the child can be considered the key factor of the parenting style from the perspective of the child's favourable development (Hajná & Stránská, 2011, Valihorová & Gallo, 2014). Also, according to Ďuricová & Hašková (2016), a positive emotional relationship in family is a predictor of pubescent youth's self-concept of ability (thus, the positive school-related

self-concept according to Meyer). This is consistent with the results of our correlation analysis, showing that the perceived positive emotional component is in a positive relation to the child's overall self-concept and vice versa.

Ďuricová & Hašková (2016) have also stated that especially weak parental control contributes to pubescent youth's positive school-related self-concept. Hajná & Stránska (2011) have also found out that people from families with moderate to weak parental control have the highest self-esteem. These results are consistent with our finding of an indicated negative correlation trend between the perceived demands component in both parents' and the child's overall self-concept. It can be understood that perceived higher pressure on performance, orders, bans, and their consistent control by parents do not strengthen pubescent youth's positive self-concept.

Already Litovski & Dusek (1985) have maintained that parents contribute substantially to children's self-evaluation. Other research has specified that perceived parental acceptance predicts the child's global self-worth, but also self-evaluation of academic competence, physical appearance, and also social competence for girls (Ohannessian et al., 1998). According to Calafat et al. (2014), a positive parenting style is related to self-concept and school performance in adolescents. More precisely, adolescents fostered in an environment of parental acceptance, dialogue and affection have a strong sense of self-confidence. In contrast, parental coercive control reduces adolescents' self-concept (Boudreault-Bouchard et al., 2013).

Also, according to the study by McClure et al. (2010), a sensitive parental approach in combination with reasonable demands reduces the likelihood of low self-esteem. Other studies (e.g., Birndorf et al., 2005; Carlson et al., 2000; Youngblade et al., 2007) have also clearly shown the connection between the young person's self-concept and the perceived parenting style in his/her family environment. Together with our results, they are clear evidence of parents having the determining influence on the psychological development of their children, even in the period when the space freed up in the process of separation from family is occupied by peer groups and their acceptance is very important for the adolescent.

In our research sample, there is no relationship between the component of freedom in either of the parents and the pubescent youth's self-concept, although Vanager (2012) has reported a statistically significant relationship between adolescents' self-esteem and autonomy in parenting. The discrepancy may be a result of different methods used, as well as cultural differences.

As for our second objective, exploration of gender differences in the correlated variables, our tests of differences in individual components of parenting

styles show only the perception of mother as statistically significantly different, in particular, of her negative emotional component and demands component. These results lead us to consider that pubertal girls perceive mother's negative emotional expressions more sensitively than boys. We understand this as a signal that they do not get so much attention and loving expressions as they need in such a challenging period of their life. Moreover, in comparison with boys, they also report increased perception of mother's demands, thus the above-mentioned higher pressure on performance, maybe higher expectations, control of fulfilment of orders and agreements. We are aware of the limits of our study related to the research sample size, so we do not presume to generalize our results to the population of Slovak pubescent youth, but the outlined parenting stereotypes could be an incentive for further research.

In our sample, the Piers-Harris Scale shows a difference in gender in the pubescent youth's overall self-concept in favour of the boys, which is consistent with Beal's (1994) report as well as the gender differences in self-esteem found out by McClure et al. (2010). Thus, we decided to inspect more profoundly the domains loading it. In comparison with the girls, the boys scored higher in two of the six domains: in the Happiness and Satisfaction subscale and much higher in the Freedom from Anxiety subscale. These partial results correspond also with gender differences concerning socio-emotional health of secondary school students in the study by Pašková (2017). It can be stated that the gender difference in the level of anxiety in favour of women appears already at a lower developmental stage and may be related to the generally more intense emotionality in women, or girls. This is also confirmed by the results of the recent study by Sia & Kaur (2015), using the same method. However, some empirical studies (Ruchkin et al. in Sia & Kaur, 2015) suggest that the increased anxiety level is related to, or may be a result of, the parenting style characterized by high control, rejection and a lack of emotional closeness. This is approximately how the girls in our sample feel about their mothers.

Conclusion

The parent should provide the child with security and safety, accept the child without reserve and any conditions whatsoever. It appears that children who are praised and positively accepted work better at school and home and they are more persevering. The opposite manner brings worse results. In his/her relation to the parents, the child does not have to deserve anything, does not have to be

successful, therefore the child should be praised, treated with love and respect, admired and encouraged.

We see the contribution of our study to research in the use of the method for self-concept measurement (Piers-Harris Scale), which is still relatively little established in our professional environment. Although we are aware of pubescent overall self-concept being influenced also by many other factors, it seems that the parenting style is not a negligible variable. A positive emotional climate in family, unconditional acceptance and trust in the child's competence facilitate the child's positive self-image and self-trust, trust in his/her own abilities, possibilities, potential. Since also school is significantly involved in the child's upbringing, it is more than desirable to apply these parenting attributes not only in family, but also in institutional education.

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