

Research Summary

"The Psycho-Environmental Correlates
of Child-Rearing Practices in Thai Mothers"

by

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Duangduen Bhanthumnavin
Miss Orapin Chuchom and Mrs. Ngamta Wanintanon

Behavioral Science Research Institute
Srinakharinwirot University, Prasanmitr

Bangkok, Thailand

1985

The present study is an attempt to examine the antecedents of maternal child-rearing practices. There are three major research objectives. First, to explore the relationship between home crowdedness and certain psychological characteristics of the parents. Secondly, to compare the predictive powers of home-crowdedness indices and the psychological characteristics of the parents on parental child-rearing practices. Finally, to identify different patterns of child rearing among various types of mothers classified according to the bio-social characteristics of the mother, the family and her focused child.

In this field study, 662 parents of students in the first two grades of primary school and the first grade in secondary school were sampled from 7 schools in Bangkok. This sample consisted of 386 mothers, 145 fathers and 130 nonparental adults (58%, 22% and 20% of the total sample). Half of them came from schools in the most densely populated areas in Bangkok and the other half came from the most sparsely populated areas of the same city.

These adults were asked to respond to sets of questionnaires in a booklet while they were assembled in the school. There were 4 sets of variables being assessed. (1) Six indices of home crowdedness were number of persons per unit area, number of persons per room, number of bedroom's functions, number of children, distance in meters

from the closest neighbor's home, and amount of local problems. These variables were assessed by filling in words and/or numbers in the spaces provided. (2) Six psychological characteristics were feeling of home crowdedness, mental health, attitudes towards the focused child, belief in external locus of control of results in child-rearing, and the amount of shifting child-rearing responsibility to school. The first five characteristics were assessed by the use of rating scale method. Each measure included 10 to 15 items each accompanied by a six-unit rating scale. The last variable was the amount of knowledge on socializing with a child of different ages. This variable was measured by indicating "right" or "wrong" for each of the 15 sentences. (3) Five techniques of child rearing included love-oriented technique, reasoning-oriented, physical vs. psychological punishment, and control. Each of the first five techniques were assessed by the use of 10 items with six-unit rating scales. The last child-rearing technique was the lateness of independence training. The respondents indicated the age of the focused child when each of the 10 independent activities were first trained. (4) The bio-social characteristics and background variables of the respondent, the family and the focused child were assessed by checking and filling in words and numbers in the spaces provided. There were the total of 30 variables in this study.

Six hypotheses were tested in this study by carrying out the Analysis of Variance with 2- and 3-way Factorial Designs the Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis, and intercorrelation matrices on the data of the total sample as well as on the data of different groups of respondents, classified by the bio-social and background variables. This type of data analysis made possible the comparisons of research results between mothers and fathers and also among different types of mothers.

There were three major findings in this study. The first was that the 4 indices of home crowdedness together could best predict the amount of variability of the feeling of home crowdedness of

the respondents (the averaged predictive value was 16.89%) next was the variability of the mental health and the belief in external control (8.47% and 6.26%). As for the other three psychological characteristics it was found that the indices of home crowdedness were their poor predictors. The indices which were found to play an important role in relation to the first 3 psychological characteristics were number of persons per room, number of bedroom's functions and number of persons per unit area. While comparing the research results among different groups of respondents, it was found that the predictive power mentioned above was stronger in fathers than in mothers (the averages were 9.17% and 6.83%). On the other hand, when comparing different types of mothers, it was evident that the predictive power was strongest in the mothers with secondary or higher level of education (the mean was 17.33%). On the contrary, the predictive powers were poor among the mothers with low education and unemployed mothers (the averages were 3.5% and 4.5%).

The second part of the major findings was that the 6 psychological characteristics taken together were more powerful predictors of the amount of child-rearing techniques than the 6 indices of home crowdedness (the averaged predictive powers were 15.83% and 1.91%). The six psychological characteristics could best predict the variability of the amount of reasoning-oriented practice (39.46%) and next was the love-oriented practice (17.69%). However, these predictors played a lesser role when used for the control practice, the physical punishment and the independence training (the averaged predictive powers were 9.92%, 7.83% and 2.54% respectively). The 3 psychological characteristics which were found to be important as predictors were attitudes towards the focused child, mental health and the knowledge in child socialization. In comparing the data of different types of respondents, it was found that these traits were more important as predictors in the mothers than in the fathers. In addition these traits were the most powerful predictors of child rearing in mothers with secondary or higher level of education

(23.60%) and were moderate predictors in employed mothers, unemployed mothers and mothers with primary education (the averaged predictive powers were 17.60%, 15.00% and 13.80% respectively).

Finally, it was found that the parents of first grade children showed less appropriate patterns of child rearing than the parents of seventh grade children. In other words, in the younger parents, the more love-oriented and reasoning-oriented they were, the less they controlled the young child. Nevertheless, the older parents also showed some inappropriate pattern of child rearing when it was found that high love-oriented practice often accompanied with high physical punishment of adolescents especially in the mothers with low level of education and high feeling of home crowdedness.

Two important recommendations based on the results from this study are prompted. First, investigations into other types of antecedents of child rearing should be carried out especially for mothers with low level of education. Secondly, programs for the development of familial environment and maternal improvement in child rearing should be carried out by using the empirical information offered in this study as programs' objectives and materials so that the quality of Thai youth can be greatly improved in the near future.