

Parental child-care practices of Slovenian preschoolers' mothers and fathers: The Family Environment Questionnaire

Maja Zupančič, Anja Podlesek and Tina Kavčič*
University of Ljubljana, Department of psychology, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Abstract: The paper reviews evidence on the construct validity and reliability of the newly developed Family Environment Questionnaire (FEQ), and presents data on the structure of socialisation practices the Slovenian parents use in daily interactions with their three-year-old children. The FEQ is a parent report measure designed to provide an assessment of individual differences in parental practices that are representative among the parents of preschool children in the given cultural community. Factor analysis of the 63 items reliably recovered a four-component solution in both, maternal and paternal self-reports indicating the following broad-band parenting practices: Authoritative Parenting, Ineffective Control, Power Assertion, and Stimulation. Variables loading high on more than one component and those that did not load on the same factor obtained from maternal and paternal data were excluded from further analyses. The 51 items that were retained and corresponded to the four factors demonstrate adequate internal consistency for both samples of respondents. In addition, parental stimulation was positively linked to authoritative parenting, while it was negatively related to ineffective control and power assertion. Mothers perceived themselves to be more authoritative and stimulative than did fathers, who described themselves as more power assertive and ineffective in control. Parent-pairs were also found to share, at least to some extent, similar parenting practices, whereas their self-perceived expression of these practices was not dependent on their child's gender.

Key words: parenting practices, self report questionnaire, mothers, fathers, early childhood development

Postopki, ki jih slovenski starši uporabljajo pri socializaciji svojih predšolskih otrok: Vprašalnik o družinskem okolju

Maja Zupančič, Anja Podlesek in Tina Kavčič
Univerza v Ljubljani, Oddelek za psihologijo, Ljubljana

Povzetek: V prispevku predstavljamo podatke o konstruktivni veljavnosti in zanesljivosti novega merskega pripomočka Vprašalnik o družinskem okolju (VDO). Ti vključujejo tudi podatke o tem, kako se v kontekstu socializiranja triletnikov strukturirajo posamezni odzivi slovenskih staršev med njihovimi vsakdanjimi interakcijami z otroki. VDO je samoocenjevalni vprašalnik za starše, ki smo ga oblikovale z namenom odkrivanja individualnih razlik v starševih socializacijskih postopkih in so reprezentativni med starši predšolskih otrok v preučevanem kulturnem kontekstu. S faktorsko analizo prvotnih 63 postavk v vprašalniku smo izločile štiri komponente, in sicer posebej pri vzorcu mam in očetov, ki so

*Naslov / address: red. prof. dr. Maja Zupančič, Univerza v Ljubljani, Oddelek za psihologijo, Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija, e-mail: maja.zupancic@ff.uni-lj.si

ocenjevali svoje vedenje do istih otrok. Štiri komponente kažejo na štiri različne vzorce vedenja staršev: avtoritativno vedenje, neučinkoviti nadzor, uveljavljanje moči in spodbujanje otroka. Spremenljivke, ki so kazale visoko obremenitev na več kot eni komponenti, in tiste, ki niso kazale obremenitev na isti komponenti pri mamah in očetih, smo izločile iz nadaljnjih analiz. Tako smo zadržale 51 postavk, ki so pripadale štirim faktorjem. Njihova notranja zanesljivost se je izkazala kot primerna pri obeh vzorcih staršev. Poleg tega se je starševo spodbujanje pri mamah in očetih pozitivno povezovalo z avtoritativnim vedenjem in negativno z neučinkovitim nadzorom in uveljavljanjem moči. Mame so se ocenile kot bolj avtoritativne in so menile, da otroke bolj spodbujajo kot očeti, ki so v primerjavi z mamami poročali, da so bolj neučinkoviti v nadzoru in pogosteje uveljavljajo moč v interakcijah z otrokom. Značilnosti starševstva so se med partnerji istih otrok zmerno pozitivno povezovali, starševa ocena izraženosti posameznih značilnosti pa ni bila odvisna od spola otrok.

Ključne besede: starševstvo, samoocena, mame, očeti, razvoj v zgodnjem otroštvu

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The study of those aspects of parenting that may have an important influence on child development has long been a focus of research in developmental psychology. A wide range of parenting dimensions reflecting prevalent parenting practices have been proposed to promote or disrupt various aspects of child development. Perhaps the best known and most influential is Baumrind's (1967) conceptualisation of parenting style (Petit, Bates & Dodge, 2000). She gathered data on parental socialisation practices by observing parents interacting with their preschool children and identified two broad dimensions in parental interactive behaviour, demandingness (establishing high standards for the children and insisting that the children meet them) and responsiveness (engagement in reciprocal discussions, acceptance of the children). The combination of these two dimensions yields four styles of parenting (Maccoby & Martin, 1983), i.e. authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and uninvolved.

Authoritarian parents are demanding and unresponsive, even rejective when the children do not comply. They engage in little reciprocal interaction with the children and expect them to accept adult's demands without any questions. They use power-assertive techniques of socialisation (threats, commands, physical force, love withdrawal) and suppress children's self-expression and independence. Authoritative parents present a combination of demandingness and responsiveness. They make reasonable demands, set limits and insist on children's compliance, while at the same time, they are affectionate, accept the children's points of view, and encourage the children's participation in decision making. Permissive parenting presents an overly tolerant approach to socialisation with responsive and undemanding parental behaviour. The parents are nurturant and accepting, but at the same time they avoid imposing demands and controls over the child's behaviour. The children can make their own decisions even when they are not yet capable to do so, they are permitted to interrupt and annoy others without any restraint (for an overview see Berk, 1997; Marjanovič Umek & Zupančič, 2004; Zupančič & Justin, 1991). Undemanding

parenting combined with unresponsiveness (indifference or rejection) constitutes the uninvolved style. It reflects a minimal commitment to child rearing, and at its extreme, is it called neglect. The uninvolved parents may respond to the child's demands, but any efforts that involve long-term goals, such as socialising, are weak (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

There is a wide array of empirical evidence that the authoritative parenting style in general presents the most effective one, at least with regard to the positive developmental outcomes in children living in western technologically developed societies (e.g. Baumrind, 1967, 1971, 1989; Cugmas, 2003; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Denham, Renwick & Holt, 1991; Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1995). It is, for example, associated with children's liveliness, happiness, friendliness, cooperativeness, independence and desire to master new tasks, high self-esteem, self-control and social skills during the preschool years (e.g. Baumrind & Black, 1967; Denham et al., 1991). The preschoolers with authoritarian parents were found relatively anxious, withdrawn, unhappy, they tended to react with hostility when frustrated, they were high in defiance, dependence on adults and lacking in exploration (e.g. Baumrind, 1967, 1971). The children of permissive parents were immature for their age, they had difficulty to control their impulses, they were disobedient and rebellious, overly demanding, non-achieving and dependent on adults (e.g. Baumrind, 1971, 1991; Kurdek & Fine, 1994), while uninvolved parenting style was linked to deficits in child's attachment, cognition, play, social skills, low tolerance for frustration and emotional control, and proneness to aggressive, acting out behaviour (e.g. Baumrind, 1991; Kurdek & Fine, 1994).

The authoritative parenting style represents a constellation of parental behaviour which is supportive and appropriate to the child's developmental characteristics (Petit et al., 2000). Several constituents of this style (parental firmness, setting limits, involvement of the child in decision making), as well as other supportive aspects of parental behaviour presumably distinct from the authoritative parenting have been studied, e.g. inductive socialisation techniques (Hart, DeWolf, Wozniak & Burts, 1992) in which the effects of the child's misbehaviour on others are communicated to him/her, provision of appropriate play experiences (Ladd, Profilet & Hart, 1992), educationally stimulating involvement, parental warmth, positive affect (e.g. Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994) etc. Some researchers have referred to these and related parental behaviours as parental positivity or supportive parenting and assumed an overall positive effect of such parenting across various aspects of child development. However, there is some evidence that different aspects of supportive parenting are relatively independent and are differentially linked to developmental outcomes (see also Petit et al., 2000).

In addition, the amounts of variance in child developmental outcomes accounted for by the parenting variables were usually found relatively modest, typically explaining between 4 to 16% of the child's concurrent adjustment (Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994). According to Bates (2001), this can reflect poor measurement of the key constructs and/or the fact that parenting variables may depend on the context pro-

vided by some other variables. Child characteristics have been recently demonstrated as significant moderators of parenting (e.g. Bates, 2001; Kochanska, 1997). The children's resistance to control, for example, predicts later externalising behaviour only when the mothers were low in parental control, while the same temperamental measure did not predict adjustment if the maternal control was high (Bates, 2001); children who were highly active were less adversely affected by psychologically impoverished environments than inactive children (Wachs, 1992); fearful children displayed less developed conscience during childhood when their mothers had used power-assertive socialisation techniques than when they used more gentle techniques, while non-fearful children's development of conscience was not linked to the parenting style (Kochanska, 1991, 1995, 1997). Such child-environment interactions in development also, at least partly, contribute to the fact that the environment that influences child developmental outcomes is largely non-shared, that is, an objectively equal parenting usually does not lead to the same effects for different children, and on the other hand, different children elicit differential parenting within the same family (see e.g. Pike, 2002).

The aim the present study (which was intended to serve the purpose of a much broader longitudinal study – see Method) was to construct an ecologically and developmentally valid inventory of preschool children's home environment tapping those parenting practices¹ that are generally assumed to affect the children's cognitive and socio-emotional developmental outcomes. A review of existing instruments (see Dix & Gershoff, 2001) shows that most of them refer to specific domains of parental behaviour, e.g. punishment, rule behaviour, control, motivational practices, involvement, etc., while assessments of the quality of home environment, related to children's educational and cognitive development is typically covered in separate instruments. If these separate instruments were used this would yield a time-consuming set of questionnaires. Specifically, we have focused on parental stimulation of various domains of preschool children's developing abilities and skills (presenting an important aspect of supportive parenting) as well as on the concrete actions the parents undertake to socialise their children and the way they express their affection toward children. The items selected in the development of this inventory had content and emphasis similar to Baumrind's observational studies (1967, 1971), MacKenzie's (1993) suggestions about the approaches the parents use in socialising their children, Herbert's (e.g. 1996a, b) work on promoting positive parenting and parental disciplinary tactics, while the items referring to parental stimulation were very similar to those from the HOME Scale (Caldwell & Bradley, 1984). However, some of the parenting practices are universal, while some are more culture specific, at least with regard to their specific form of expression, frequency of use of specific techniques or disciplinary tactics, and even the age of target children to whom they apply. At the

¹ In this paper, the term *parental practices* refers to broad-band behavioural patterns of parenting. Thus, they do not denote domain-specific behaviour, for example involvement in child preschool education.

same time, the parenting practices which differ between the cultures depend on the cultural belief systems about parenting (for an overview see Harkness & Super, 1996). Therefore, when constructing the inventory presented in this paper, we have also taken into account the data obtained in Slovenian studies on parental belief systems about parenting practices and parental expectations about preschool children's development (e.g. Veber, 2003; Zupančič, 1999) as well as the information obtained by a large sample of Slovenian preschool teachers reporting on their own parenting practices (Zupančič & Kavčič, 2002).

It has been demonstrated that the Slovenian mothers of one- to three-year-old children predominantly used verbal strategies to elicit desired behaviours in their children, i.e. most frequently presenting desired behaviour as good, interesting, leading to an enjoyable outcome; persuading a child to a desirable action; explaining why the children have to behave in a certain way; modelling; and less frequently, they used conditioning (reward), while a minority of mothers showed no attempts to shape the children's behaviour. To deal with the children's undesirable or unacceptable behaviour the mothers most frequently used a distraction technique, induction, and negative reinforcement (no physical punishment with few exceptions in a mild form), whereas eliciting empathy for a victim of child's misbehaviour and ignoring inappropriate acts were rarely used. On the other hand, the majority of mothers believed that children start to learn immediately after birth or even before birth, while they perceived the most important means of young child's learning in adult modelling, other forms of interaction with adults (e.g. play) and child's own experimentation (Zupančič, 1999). With a sample of Slovenian mothers and fathers of preschool children Veber (2003) showed that both parents predominantly hold authoritative beliefs about parenting, they largely disagree with authoritarian practices (the permissive ones were not included), and perhaps specifically in relation to parents from other Western countries, they express an overly protective attitude toward children (e.g. they have to do everything in favour of a child, care constantly for him/her, perceive child care as the only parental goal etc.).

In line with most recent studies (e.g. Petit et al., 2000; Weiss & Schartz, 1999), we have also used a multiple informant design including reports by mothers and fathers of three-year-old children in order to explore whether the spouses organise their perception of several parenting practices in a similar way. Even if they do, different levels of (self-perceived) expression of a certain parenting practices might be linked to a parental role (that of a mother and father, i.e. the mothers could perceive themselves to be more affectionate than fathers do). There might be some differences in a basic way the mothers and fathers socialise their three-year-olds due to, for example, small gender differences in adult personality (e.g. Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, Bucik & Boben, 1997; van Lieshout, 2000), gender differences in perceptions of parental roles (for an overview see Turner & Helms, 1993) and/or differences in strength of child-parent attachment which is, in the average, somewhat stronger in mother-child than father-child dyads (Papalia & Olds, 1992).

On the other hand, we were also interested in the within-parent-pair similarities/differences with regard to parenting practices, i.e. are the mother and father of the same child significantly alike in their (self-perceived) expression of parenting characteristics or not, and if so/not so, which are the parenting characteristics that show more similarities/differences between the spouses than others. At least moderate correlations between mother's and father's broad-band parenting characteristics were expected because both parents share a similar role (that of a parent), communicate about their child's behaviour and their own parental attitudes as well as about their actually perceived behaviour toward the child. On the other hand, the spouses might differ in their self-perceived characteristics of parenting due to differences in their personality, their beliefs as to which parental practices are effective, and the exact nature of their relationship with the child (Funder & West, 1993). Slight differences might also exist in parental self-perceived parenting behaviour towards boys and girls. The adults may tend to differentially socialise their sons and daughters in response to some perceived gender differences in child personality (Feingold, 1994; Ruble & Martin, 1998; Zupančič & Kavčič, 2003; Zupančič, Kavčič & Fekonja, 2003), although they may, at the same time, try to treat boys and girls alike (Zupančič, 1999).

Method

Instrument construction

The Family Environment Questionnaire (FEQ) was designed for the purposes of a larger longitudinal study, exploring the effects of preschool education on children's cognitive, language, social and personality development. Four developmental psychologists reviewed recent literature related to the effects of preschool children's family environment on their psychological development and measurement of home environment (for a review see Perlmutter, Touliatis & Holden, 2001). Since none of the existing instruments was found completely suitable for studies in Slovenian cultural context, we independently formed items that reflected different aspects of parental child-care practices and were, as demonstrated in previous Slovenian studies of parental ethnotheories (Veber, 2003; Zupančič, 1999), assumed to be ecologically relevant with the Slovenian society. We were especially interested in how often and in which ways parents stimulate their child's (cognitive) development (e.g. *I encourage my child to learn numbers*), show affection to the child (e.g. *When I say goodbye to my child I hug and kiss him/her*), and the way they discipline their child (e.g. *I explain to my child why he/she needs to follow the rules*).

Over hundred items were constructed covering several aspects of parental practices, previously found to affect different areas of child development, e.g. cognitive, moral, social development (Baumrind & Black, 1967; Kurdek & Fine, 1994;

Zupančič & Justin, 1991): encouragement to learn (*I encourage my child to play pretend, e.g. to cook, drive a car*), expression of affection (*When I verbally reward my child, I also hug, kiss, caress him/her*), induction (*I explain to my child the consequences of his/her appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for other people*), modelling (*If I demand a certain kind of behaviour from my child, e.g. to keep clean, not to say bad words, to help others, I take care that I behave the same way*), physical punishment (*If my child misbehaves, I hit, grab, pinch or shake him/her*), withdrawal (of love, privileges; *I withdraw a privilege without question to punish my child's misbehaviour*), other forms of power-assertion (e.g. yelling, criticism), within-parent-pair and intraindividual consistency on disciplinary tactics (*I agree with my spouse on the demands we put toward our child*), reward (social, affection; *I praise my child in front of other people*), parental control of his/her own anger (*When I am angry at my child or I take offence at him/her, I control my emotion well*) child's participation in a family routine (*The child has a say in my family plans, his/her wishes and interests are also considered*), ignoring child's inappropriate behaviour (*When my child misbehaves, I simply ignore him/her*), setting limits to child behaviour (*When I say "no" to my child, it really means no*). Some items were also put in a reversed form, e.g. *When I threaten my child that I will take an unpleasant action, I know in advance I will not actually do it*, measuring intraindividual consistency; *If my child does something I do not like, I let him/her do it anyway*, measuring setting limits, etc.

All items were inspected by each member of the research team in order to examine their relevance and, if necessary, they were corrected (to improve clarity of their written expression, avoid ambiguity; concrete examples were added in parenthesis when needed) or omitted (to avoid replications). As a result, 63 items were retained in the preliminary version of the FEQ. A four-point rating scale was assigned to the items, describing the frequency of parental behaviour: 1 - (almost) never, 2 - sometimes, 3 - often, 4 - (almost) always.

The questionnaire was filled-in by a sample of 100 preschool teachers attending in-service training. They were themselves parenting at least one preschool child. They were asked to report on their own parenting practices, mark ambiguous and/or irrelevant items and suggest alternatives. After analysing their responses (Zupančič & Kavčič, 2002) some amendments were made to improve clarity and relevance of the questionnaire. For example, the item *I use physical punishment as a way to discipline my child* was unacceptable for a vast majority of respondents, but *I also use physical punishment as a way to discipline my child* was found appropriate and produced some variability; *I encourage my child to learn spatial relationships* was elaborated by adding *I tell him where is what – under, on, in front, behind* in brackets. Next, the improved questionnaire with 63 items was given to a pilot sample of 50 preschoolers' mothers. As their written comments about the items showed, the mothers found all items clear, relevant and feasible to rate and therefore all of the 63 items were kept. Short instructions were added to the questionnaire, asking parents

to rate the frequency of their everyday behaviour toward the target child. They were also asked to read carefully and rate all the items by circling the corresponding number on a given rating scale. In addition, parents were told that there are no correct or incorrect answers.

Participants

Mothers and fathers of 353 three-year-old children gave a written consent to participate in the study. Their children attended one of 53 preschool groups in 17 preschool institutions which were sampled in different regions of Slovenia. Filled-in questionnaires of 320 fathers and 339 mothers were returned (data from both parents were obtained for 316 children).

Mothers' and fathers' education ranged from 8-year-primary school to Ph.D. Forty percent of fathers and 28 % of mothers completed eight to eleven years of formal education, 30 % of fathers and 32 % of mothers finished high school (12 years of formal education), while 28 % of fathers and 38 % of mothers obtained at least a college degree (14 years of formal education). The average parental education level was 12 years of formal education (data were missing for 6 fathers and 6 mothers).

The target children were aged 31 to 46 months ($M = 38.0$; $SD = 2.5$); approximately half of them were girls and half of them were boys. Most of the children were either the only child in the family (41 %) or had one sibling (48 %), and 9 % of the children had two, three or four siblings (data missing for 2 % children). Over half of all children were first-born (54 %), 37 % were second-born, 6 % third-born, 2 children were fourth-born and 1 was fifth-born (data were missing for 5 children). About one third of children entered preschool at the age of 10 to 15 months, one third at 16 to 30 months of age, and one third at 31 to 45 months of age (data were missing for 4 children).

Procedure

At the beginning of the study, letters were sent to 18 preschool institutions in different regions of Slovenia, inviting them to participate in a five-year follow-up study examining the effects of preschool on children's (aged three years) development and academic achievement. All but one preschool agreed to participate. Children's preschool teachers were informed about the course of the study and asked for their co-operation. Children's parents were asked to give written consent for theirs and their child's participation. The researchers then distributed the questionnaires to preschool teachers in participating preschools and asked the teachers to pass them to those parents who agreed to take part in the study. Each pair of parents received an envelope with two copies of FEQ, one marked as the mother and one as the father version (along with some other instruments, enclosed for the purposes of the larger study, including a questionnaire about demographic data, i.e. maternal and paternal education, child's

birth date and birth order, the number of children in the family, and the target child's age at his/her entry to preschool). Each questionnaire had the target child's name written on. Preschool teachers instructed the parents to fill-in the questionnaire independently (mother and father separately), without discussing or trying to reach consensus while assessing their behaviour toward the target child. Parents returned filled-in questionnaires in sealed envelopes to their child's preschool teachers who later gave them to one of the researchers.

Results

Within each variable, missing values were replaced with variable median values. Then principal component analysis was performed to form the sub-scales. Sub-scale scores were then calculated for fathers and mothers separately. Correlations and differences between these scores were examined. Statistical hypotheses were tested at α -level .05.

Factor structure of FEQ was determined using exploratory analysis on paternal data and on maternal data separately (see Table 1). Principal component analysis was used and, because moderate correlations between components were expected (e.g. Maccoby & Martin, 1993; Veber, 2003) and also found, Oblimin Rotation method with Kaiser Normalisation was applied.

In the analysis of both paternal and maternal data Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was equal to 0.80 and Bartlett's test of sphericity gave a positive result, $\chi^2(1953) = 6256, p = .000$ for paternal sample, and $\chi^2(1953) = 6048, p = .000$ for maternal sample. For both paternal and maternal data, scree-plot criterion indicated a four-component solution, which was also the most interpretable solution. In paternal data, the first three components explained 26.26 % of the total variance, and the first four components explained 30.42 % of the total variance, respectively. In the three-component solution components were not highly correlated (the highest component correlation was .10), whereas in the four-component solution the first and the fourth factor were moderately correlated (see Table 2). The examination of the solutions showed that one of the components in the three-component solution was decomposed into two factors. In maternal data, similar patterns were observed. Three components explained 24.25 % of the total variance, and four components explained 28.57 % of the total variance. Scree-plot suggested four-component solution. Three components were not correlated (the highest component correlation was .05). One of the components was decomposed into two new components in the four-component solution, where the two components were then correlated (see Table 2). The pattern matrix of the loadings of variables on each component is shown in Table 1, both for paternal and maternal data, so that loadings can be directly compared. The critical loading used in the comparison of both kinds of data was chosen at value of .30. We can see that for many of the variables the structure was similar in

both samples of parents. However, some variables did not load highly on the same factor.

As presented in Table 1, the first component contains items where a parent uses inductive and rewarding disciplinary techniques, sets limits to child behaviour, is responsive and affectionate, communicates with the spouse on disciplinary tactics in relation to their child, and is consistent with regard to rules and demands he/she imposes upon the child. This component could be defined as Authoritative Parenting. The second component in maternal data and the third component in paternal data are composed of items, which show ineffective parental control, i.e. the parent is inconsistent in setting rules, demands and his/her consequent behaviour toward the child (does not insist on rules and demands), lets the child do what he/she wants, does things instead of him/her, negotiates with him/her for a long time, and usually gives up when the child does not comply. Therefore, this component could be interpreted as Ineffective Control. The third component in maternal data and the second one in paternal data contains items which refer to power-assertive approach to child socialisation, i.e. using force in a form of physical and verbal punishment, withdrawal of privileges and love, encouragement of child's acceptance of parental words for what is right, and parental insistence on child's immediate obedience. This component could be labelled Power Assertion. Higher loadings on the fourth component can be found mostly in items referring to stimulation of the child, i.e. encouragement of various forms of play (pretend, sensorimotor, play with puzzles), learning numbers, shapes, colours, social manners etc., but also parental expressions of affection toward the child. Therefore this component was labelled Stimulation.

Variables that did not load on the same factor obtained from the paternal and maternal data were excluded from further analyses. Variables loading high on two or more components were also excluded. Fifty-two items were retained. Table 3 presents the reliability (internal consistency measure) for the obtained scales.

Next, factor scores were calculated so that values on the variables that loaded on each component (see the last column of Table 1) were averaged (scoring of variable 33 was reversed). Three-hundred sixteen pairs of fathers and mothers' scores on the four components were examined. Average scores are presented in Table 4. Because distributions of the scores deviated from normal distribution (Shapiro-Wilk's statistics was statistically significant for almost all the scores), Wilcoxon's test was calculated to compare the scores obtained in the two samples. Results of the test are as well presented in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that there are statistically significant differences in maternal and paternal child-care practices. Mothers describe themselves as being more authoritative and stimulative, while fathers describe themselves as being more permissive and authoritarian.

In Table 5, correlations between the maternal and paternal data can be found. Moderate correlations can be seen in the diagonal cells in the lower left quadrant of the correlation matrix. These correlations between mothers' and fathers' responses

Table 1: Factor loadings for each variable on the components after oblique rotation.

	Variable	Fathers (N = 320)				Mothers (N = 339)				Scale
		1	3	2	4	1	2	3	4	
1	encourage to play with puzzles	-.06	-.07	-.05	-.55	.04	-.05	-.10	-.55	4
2	encourage to listen to songs, fairy-tails	-.03	-.01	.07	-.56	.00	.03	-.01	-.54	4
3	encourage play with natural materials	-.04	.04	.05	-.55	-.01	-.03	-.03	-.55	4
4	encourage sensorimotor play	-.10	-.02	-.01	-.57	-.10	-.07	-.08	-.57	4
5	encourage to learn numbers	-.02	.03	.04	-.67	-.09	.07	-.05	-.71	4
6	encourage to learn shapes	.03	.06	-.06	-.64	.03	-.08	-.02	-.68	4
7	explain simple rules of good behaviour and verbal manners	.18	-.04	.11	-.54	.18	.00	.02	-.47	4
8	encourage pretend play	.04	.07	-.03	-.58	.14	-.03	-.03	-.47	4
9	caress, kiss, cuddle the child	.28	.06	-.11	-.31	.20	.10	-.10	-.30	
10	encourage to learn colours	.15	-.04	-.04	-.58	.09	.07	.01	-.59	4
11	encourage to learn short texts	.02	.06	.01	-.58	.06	-.04	.07	-.60	4
12	encourage to learn spatial relationships	.17	.01	-.05	-.55	.24	.08	-.02	-.49	4
13	watches age-appropriate TV program alone	-.01	.11	.24	-.24	-.06	.22	.30	-.29	
14	watches TV together with an older family member	.08	.04	-.03	-.21	.19	.09	.04	.09	
15	encourage to tidy up toys alone	.08	-.21	.13	-.43	.19	-.23	.21	-.25	
16	can express negative emotion without reprisal	.32	.14	-.14	.17	.40	.09	-.20	.27	1
17	hit, shake, spank etc. if misbehaves	-.00	-.13	.52	.04	-.03	.11	.43	.09	3
18	do not scold even when acts contrary to what is expected	.23	.09	.05	.02	.12	.22	-.01	.07	
19	also use physical punishment	-.11	-.04	.58	.06	-.05	.02	.38	.04	3
20	talk to my spouse on parenting practices	.52	-.12	.02	-.13	.43	-.09	-.06	-.09	1
21	agree with my spouse on the demands	.32	-.15	-.15	-.13	.34	-.13	-.06	-.05	1
22	set clear limits to child behaviour	.43	-.35	.16	-.10	.52	-.29	.21	-.10	1
23	praise appropriate behaviour	.49	-.02	-.04	-.16	.35	.19	.13	-.14	1
24	thank when the child helps	.40	-.08	-.07	-.22	.39	.04	.06	-.15	1
25	criticise behaviour	.29	-.25	.37	.10	.32	-.24	.20	-.08	
26	explain what is expected	.56	-.27	.18	.05	.56	-.21	.10	-.13	1
27	control my emotion when angry	.18	-.06	-.32	-.06	.30	.20	-.10	.03	
28	ignore misbehaviour	.12	.05	.08	.07	.12	.19	.10	-.03	
29	The child has a say in family plans	.52	.07	-.11	-.04	.38	.13	-.06	-.19	1
30	The child can interrupt the adult's talk	.28	.36	-.28	.04	.25	.29	-.27	.14	
31	insist to comply at once	.18	-.09	.46	.00	.15	-.15	.49	.05	3
32	hug the child when we separate	.30	.05	-.10	-.23	.19	.23	-.12	-.18	
33	"no" really means no	.21	-.56	.23	-.08	.44	-.35	.25	.01	2
34	explain demands and rules	.43	-.34	-.14	-.15	.68	-.11	-.16	.02	1
35	consistent demands and rules	.33	-.49	.09	-.12	.56	-.42	.10	-.13	
36	tell about expected behaviour in advance	.48	-.20	.40	-.00	.41	-.11	.26	-.14	1
37	praise in front of others	.53	.15	.09	-.06	.35	.31	.02	-.26	1
38	praise immediately	.65	.02	.00	.00	.44	.19	.04	-.22	1
39	praise verbally and affectionately	.48	.09	-.06	-.20	.36	.27	-.16	-.24	1
40	attentive when listen to the child	.38	-.10	-.20	-.22	.43	.11	-.09	-.20	1
41	model the behaviour expected	.36	-.15	-.16	-.17	.53	-.10	-.05	-.13	1
42	encourage to express opinion	.51	.09	-.20	-.25	.54	-.01	-.21	-.15	1
43	comfort the child	.54	.03	-.24	-.11	.54	.18	-.22	-.07	1
44	negotiate for a long time	.24	.49	-.04	-.14	.01	.41	.04	-.13	2
45	knows there will be no punishment when threatened	.01	.44	.19	-.19	-.04	.60	.14	-.10	2
46	loud, yell at the child	-.02	.01	.60	.09	-.02	.12	.50	.10	3
47	reason with the child when misbehaves	.40	.22	.08	-.06	.39	.28	.10	.11	1
48	sulk over the child's disobedience	-.02	.18	.45	-.03	-.12	.22	.41	-.15	3
49	tolerate the behaviour I do not like	-.02	.45	-.08	.03	.01	.49	.02	.05	2
50	when does not do the task requested I do it	.14	.59	.04	.09	.02	.55	.08	.10	2
51	praise in advance	-.02	.48	.20	-.09	-.10	.44	.30	-.07	2
52	easily upset when the child misbehaves	.11	.06	.60	.10	.06	.12	.53	-.05	3
53	encourage to tell why the child misbehaved	.41	-.05	.02	-.21	.50	.09	-.05	.01	1
54	say "no" then the child is let to do it	-.03	.62	.08	-.03	-.21	.49	-.00	-.06	2
55	give in when the child seems upset	.06	.64	.11	-.03	-.07	.58	.06	.08	2
56	encourage to tell about problems	.49	-.11	-.15	-.18	.56	.00	-.05	-.16	1
57	withdraw privileges without explanations	-.06	.00	.55	-.17	-.05	-.09	.51	-.00	3
58	criticise to elicit proper behaviour	.20	.02	.52	.04	.15	.03	.50	.15	3
59	explain why the rules have to be followed	.65	-.12	.08	.07	.63	-.18	.14	.02	1
60	put the child away for punishment	-.03	-.03	.43	-.06	.05	-.10	.42	.10	3
61	explain the consequences of (mis)behaviour	.57	-.08	.10	-.01	.57	-.12	.02	-.07	1
62	punish without explaining reasons	-.11	.16	.35	-.06	-.11	.19	.32	-.06	3
63	has to obey because I said so	-.19	.13	.39	-.14	-.20	.19	.40	-.08	3

Note. The items presented in the column Variable are shortened. Loadings higher than .300 are written in bold. The second and the third component in maternal data were reversed in their position, so that the comparison of the structure can be straightforward. In the last column the component to which the variable is most highly related is written. Empty cells in this column show that the variable was excluded from further analyses because it did not load clearly with any of the components or because it loaded with different factors in the two sets of data.

Table 2: Component correlation matrix for paternal and maternal data.

Component	Fathers			Mothers		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
2	.07			.03		
3	.04	.03		.04	.04	
4	-.29	.02	.03	-.27	-.02	-.05

Note. Component 2 in paternal data corresponds to component 3 in maternal data, and component 3 in paternal data corresponds to component 2 in maternal data. For maternal data, the components were labelled in the following manner: 1 – Authoritative Parenting, 2 – Ineffective Control, 3 – Power Assertion, 4 – Stimulation.

Table 3: Reliability analysis of the formed scales.

Scale	Items	-coefficient	
		Fathers	Mothers
1 – Authoritative Parenting	16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 29, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 47, 53, 56, 59, 61	.87	.86
2 – Ineffective Control	33, 44, 45, 49, 50, 51, 54, 55	.68	.67
3 – Power Assertion	17, 19, 31, 46, 48, 52, 57, 58, 60, 62, 63	.72	.66
4 – Stimulation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12	.83	.82

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of the four component scores for the two samples and the results of the Wilcoxon's signed ranks test ($N = 316$).

Component	Fathers		Mothers		Wilcoxon's test			
	Me	Q	Me	Q	R _{neg}	R _{pos}	z	p
1 – Authoritative Parenting	3.18	0.56	3.39	0.45	104	194	6.81	.000
2 – Ineffective Control	1.88	0.60	1.88	0.37	151	112	2.81	.005
3 – Power Assertion	1.73	0.36	1.64	0.45	162	109	3.32	.001
4 – Stimulation	2.82	0.54	3.09	0.51	73	216	8.70	.000

on the same scale show that parenting (or at least their perceptions of parenting practices) is, to a certain extent, shared by both parents. In Table 5 we can also see that after the average score for each component was calculated and correlations of the scores were computed, the component-score correlation matrix within each sample did not change much (compare Fathers – Fathers correlations and Mothers – Mothers correlations in Table 5 with respective correlations in Table 2). Moderate correlations can be seen between component 1 and component 4, whereas other correlations are lower, although some of them (especially in maternal sample) reach statistical significance. Positive correlations can be observed between Authoritative Parenting and Stimulation on one side and Ineffective Control and Power Assertion on the other side, whereas low negative correlations were obtained between Authoritative Parenting and Power Assertion. The inspection of scatterplots showed that the relations between different components were not U-shaped or inverted U-

Table 5: Pearson coefficients of correlation between four component scores within and between two parental samples (N = 316).

	Fathers				Mothers			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Fathers								
1		-.11	-.07	.46**				
2	-.11		.12*	.06				
3	-.07	.12*		-.00				
4	.46**	.06	-.00					
Mothers								
1	.46**	.01	.00	.24**		-.12*	-.09	.47**
2	-.13*	.42**	.10	-.02	-.12*		.17**	.01
3	-.07	.08	.47**	.01	-.09	.17**		-.04
4	.23**	.04	-.01	.46**	.47**	.01	-.04	

Note. Components are numbered in the following manner: 1 – Authoritative Parenting, 2 – Ineffective Control, 3 – Power Assertion, 4 – Stimulation.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

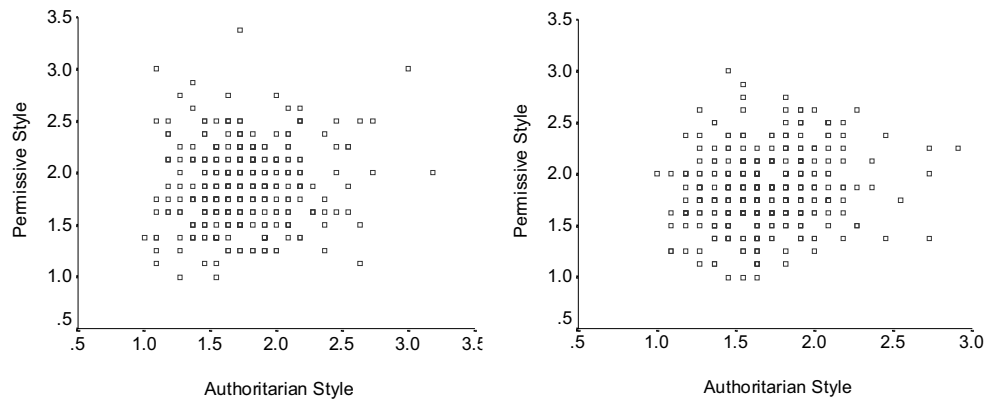


Figure 1: Relation between the Ineffective Control scores and the Power Assertion scores in (A) maternal sample and in (B) paternal sample.

shaped. Although there were some statistically significant correlations, the correlation coefficients were low (the correlation clouds were dispersed – see an example in Figure 1) and there were no clear relations between the components.

We also examined whether parents, when parenting boys and when parenting girls, use different parenting practices. Because the distributions of scores again deviated from normal, we calculated medians and interquartile ranges for each component score, separately for paternal and maternal sample, and performed a non-parametric test, Mann-Whitney U test, to test the differences between the scores of boys' parents and the scores of girls' parents. No statistically significant differences in the component scores due to child's gender were found (see Table 6).

Table 6: Differences in styles of parenting boys and girls.

	boys		girls		Mann-Whitney test		
	Me	$Q_3 - Q_1$	Me	$Q_3 - Q_1$	U	z	p
Fathers							
1 – Authoritative Parenting	3.29	0.48	3.19	0.57	11540	-1.16	.247
2 – Ineffective Control	1.88	0.50	1.88	0.50	12409	-0.09	.930
3 – Power Assertion	1.73	0.55	1.73	0.36	12446	-0.04	.966
4 – Stimulation	2.82	0.64	2.91	0.55	12026	-0.56	.575
Mothers							
1 – Authoritative Parenting	3.41	0.45	3.36	0.45	12270	-0.26	.796
2 – Ineffective Control	1.75	0.38	1.88	0.38	11816	-0.82	.410
3 – Power Assertion	1.64	0.45	1.64	0.36	12243	-0.29	.769
4 – Stimulation	3.00	0.70	3.09	0.55	11165	-1.62	.105

Discussion

The FEQ was developed to provide a measure of parental practices, relevant among the Slovenian parents of pre-school children. Construction of this instrument was based upon Baumrind's findings (1967, 1971, 1989), MacKenzie's (1993) and Herbert's (1996a, b) work on parental socialisation, while it also referred to parental stimulation of child development as conceptualised in the well known HOME Scale (Caldwell & Bradley, 1984). Factor analyses of the FEQ, performed for the mothers' and fathers' ratings of their parental practices independently, reliably indicated that four major components of family environment underlie the items assessed in the FEQ in relation to three-year-old children. We labelled these components Authoritative Parenting, Ineffective Control, Power Assertion, and Stimulation of a child's cognitive development. Some of the items (that did not load clearly on a single component or loaded on different components in maternal and paternal samples) were then excluded from the questionnaire in order to obtain components that would be comparable and applicable to both maternal and paternal samples.

We could say that, overall, the expected structure emerged in our data and that the three components of parenting showed conceptual similarity to the descriptions of certain aspects of authoritative, permissive and authoritarian parenting styles, presented by Baumrind (1967, 1971, 1989), MacKenzie (1993) and Herbert (1996a, b). Items related to parental stimulation of a child's cognitive development formed their own component. However, a concern is present with the expression of this component. Namely, all the items related to parental stimulation of a child were presented together, at the beginning of the questionnaire, which could be the cause of higher intercorrelations among them. We could be much more certain that the Stimulation dimension is relevant if this component emerged with the Stimulation items interspersed among items representing other components. In the future, the order of the retained 51 items should be changed and the reliability of the obtained factor structure should be re-examined.

In both, mothers and fathers, authoritative parenting was moderately related to parental stimulation of children's cognitive development, indicating that more authoritative parents also provide more cognitive stimulation to their children, whereas this encouragement does not seem to be linked to other parenting practices. Since authoritative parenting includes many examples of inductive techniques (e.g. parental explaining of demands and rules, expectations, and consequences of certain behaviours, reasoning with the child, encouragement to express opinions, etc.) there might be a general tendency to encourage and stimulate the child across different domains (cognitive, social, moral).

When interpreting the results, one must keep in mind that the percentage of variance explained was relatively low, and that a lot of residual variance remained unexplained. The reason for this might be that a lot of measurement error was present in measuring the key constructs. However, low percentage of the total variance explained might also reflect that there are still many other contextual variables affecting parental responses which should be monitored. Such contextual variables may be, among many, certain situational factors, subjective interpretation of the items by the parents in our samples, the use of socially accepted responses as the parents might be informed about certain theories to child development and certain parental practices might be promoted by kindergarten staff, the parent's personality (Frost Olsen, Martin & Halverson, 1999), the child's personality (see Bates, 2001), etc.

On average, the informants' reports on their parental practices support the conclusion that the parenting practices of Slovenian parents of three-year-old children were found predominantly authoritative as well as encouraging the child's cognitive development. A minority of parents were found either more ineffective in control, power assertive, or both, using the tactics of the two opposite directions in socialisation of their child. These findings are in line with previous conclusions based on the reports of Slovenian parents of preschool children (Cugmas, 2003; Veber, 2003; Zupančič, 1999). The comparison of the four parenting components across maternal and paternal samples showed that the mothers perceived themselves somewhat more frequently to be authoritative and stimulating in relation to their children than fathers. The latter, in turn, reported to use power assertion as well as ineffective control slightly more often than the mothers. This might be due to some differences in the perception of maternal and paternal parenting role, differences in mothers' and fathers' beliefs about effective parenting, and the differences in contexts where the mother-child and father-child interaction predominantly takes place during their everyday activities. But, it should be emphasised, that the mothers and fathers in general show much more similarity than differences in their parenting practices. However, this does not necessarily imply that the spouses behave (or at least perceive to behave) overwhelmingly alike in relation to the same child. This was indicated by the within parent-pair (mother-father) positive correlations for each of the corresponding four parenting components, which were found moderate. Various contextual factors may have important implications for the size of these parent-pair correlations: e.g.

each of the parents interacts with the child in a somewhat different context than the other, each parent may not have the same kind of relationship with their child, the spouses differ in their personalities, and to a greater or lesser degree in their beliefs about what practices are relevant and important for their child's development (Funder & West, 1993). All these, and probably many other factors, may lead to different self-perceptions of parental behaviour toward the same child.

The comparisons of parental practices across children's gender indicate that the parents might be using similar parenting practices when socialising their three-year-old boys and girls. However, these results do not necessarily show that the expressions of parenting characteristics are similar for boys' and girls' parents. They only show that parents of boys and girls perceive their own parenting practices in a similar manner, which could be culturally dependent. It has been previously shown that the gender stereotypes in Slovenia, at least in relation to infants and toddlers, are no longer extensive. Parents tend to react to both sons and daughters similarly, pose them equal demands regarding discipline, show them similar amounts of affection, give them equal opportunities to learn, provide them similar play materials etc. (e.g. Veber, 2003; Zupančič, 1999), although they perceive their personality characteristics somewhat differently (Zupančič & Kavčič, 2003).

In future studies, the validation of FEQ should proceed through external validation criterion, e.g. observational measures of parent-child interaction, comparison of ratings by parents of discrete groups of children (children with/without behaviour problems, academically less/more successful children). FEQ should also be examined on samples of parents parenting older preschool children. We could assume that similar structure of data should be observed because (a) the FEQ items do not tap behaviours specific only for parents of 3-year-olds, and (b) the structure of Slovenian parental ethnotheories on child-rearing practices was found very similar through increasing age of preschool children (Veber, 2003). Since the structure of the FEQ is the same for maternal and paternal ratings, this instrument is suitable for comparison of parenting practices of mothers and fathers within the same family. In addition, the averaged ratings of both parents could be used instead of ratings of one parent only. The use of ratings of multiple informants might have many advantages. When using a single-informant score, one might inappropriately assume that the similarity between the spouses parenting behaviour is greater than actually exists. Using the aggregate scores of multiple informants might correct for such an error. The averaged ratings of multiple informants used in further analysis might also decrease the method variance, which in case of parenting behaviour might in turn increase the reliability and validity of measurements (Schwartz & Mearns, 1989; Weiss & Schwartz, 1999).

Conclusions

After a revision, FEQ could be used for assessing the parental child-care practices in Slovenian families. Besides the socio-economic status and other environmental indi-

cators FEQ could give useful information about contextual covariates, which in developmental studies often represent confounding variables. Used as a covariate, parental child-care practice could be controlled for and excluded from the effect of the studied independent variables on dependent variables (e.g. Zupančič & Kavčič, in press). For example, if we studied the effect of attending preschool on a child's cognitive development, controlling for the parental practice (e.g. amount of stimulation which might represent a confounding variable) would provide a much clearer picture about the studied effect. FEQ could also serve as a useful tool in investigating the moderator effects on child development. Contemporary research (see Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington & Bornstein, 2000 for an overview), for example, suggests that parenting has some moderating effect on the links between child characteristics and his/her later adjustment.

In addition, the use of a person-centred approach (e.g. van Aken, van Lieshout, Scholte & Haselager, 2002) in relation to parenting practices as measured by FEQ might be relevant in order to determine distinct types of parenting (e.g. a type of parents scoring high on Ineffective Control and Power Assertion, but low on Stimulation). By focusing on individuals and on the organisation of characteristic behaviours within persons, this approach to research seeks to avoid the shortcomings of the variable-centred approach which is focused on a single variable, i. e. on a specific behavioural component abstracted from the individual. Therefore the profiles of scores on extracted components within individual parents could be analysed to define groups of parents with similar configuration of behaviours towards their children (Hart, Atkins & Fegley, 2003; Mervielde and Asendorpf, 2000). Subsequently, if the parenting types could be identified, the person-centred approach might serve as a complement to the variable-centred approach and thus contribute to a better understanding of parenting effects on child development.

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Although the family is the principal context in which human development takes place, it is but one of several settings in which developmental process can and do occur. Moreover, the processes operating in different settings are not independent of each other. To cite a common example, events at home can affect the child's progress in school, and vice versa. Child Care Child Development Single Mother Moral Development Achievement Motivation. These keywords were added by machine and not by the authors. This process is experimental and the keywords may be updated as the learning algorithm improves.Â The development of mother-infant and father-infant attachments in the second year of life. *Developmental Psychology*, 13, 637â€“648. CrossRefGoogle Scholar. Lamb, M. E. (1977b).Â Parent-child relation and parental personality in relation to young childrenâ€™s sex-role preferences. *Child Development*, 34, 589â€“607. PubMedGoogle Scholar. Nash, S. C., & Feldman, S. S. (1981). Half of parents in two-parent families and less than 40 percent of single parents exercise vigorously at least once a week.Â Parental Relationships. Increasingly, research indicates that the role of the family context in adolescent well-being goes beyond the importance of the direct relationship between a parent and a child.Â practice is maintaining an organized and structured home environment, for example, by establishing routines and setting limits on adolescentsâ€™ time spent watching television or playing video games, and knowing the childâ€™s friends.22. About a quarter of adolescents have parents who say they only know some or even none of their childâ€™s friends. Children who in connection with lifecircumstances were left without parental attention and care, should be provided with the protection of state bodies. They are defined in foster families or in specialized institutions, where they will be supervised and taken care of.Â An orphan can only be called a child who lost both his father and mother because they died. Definition.Â 155 of the Family Relations Code suggests that the list of such institutions can also be supplemented by other non-profit organizations that will exercise their main functions in the form of supervision of such minors.