

The Effect of Perceived Parental Behavior on Adolescent Emotional Regulation

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This paper examined relationships between perceived positive parental behaviors (warmth and autonomy), perceived negative parental behaviors (hostility, neglect, and undifferentiated rejection), and emotional regulation strategies of cognitive appraisal and emotional suppression. It specifically sought to determine if parental behaviors have positive and negative effects on cognitive appraisal. The present study partially made use of the PART- theory, which is a socialization theory. The Parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory) is an evidence-based theory of socialization that identifies causes, consequences, and correlates of interpersonal acceptance and rejection (particularly parental) across cultures. In this study, autonomy was an added construct to the warmth dimension. Means, standard deviations, correlations, and path analysis were used to arrive at the findings. Significant correlations were observed for warmth and autonomy, hostility, neglect, and undifferentiated rejection, and cognitive appraisal and suppression. However, no large effects were observed for parental behaviors on emotional regulation strategies as indicated by a path analysis model. With NFI and GFI values exceeding .9, the path analysis model was adjudged to be fit. Conclusions and recommendations are also cited.

Keywords: Parental acceptance & rejection, autonomy, emotional regulation, PARTheory

The role of parents in their children's lives cannot be ignored. Indeed, the presence and absence of parents can make or break their children's emotional and social adjustment in the future. However, more than the absence or presence of the parents, it is the quality of parent-child relationship that matters. Given recent studies about Tiger moms authoritarian parenting, strict disciplinary measures employed by parents, and positive cultural implications of such parenting styles on adolescent development, there are benefits to

previously judged negative parenting. Another aspect of the parent- child relationship is the level of autonomy being granted by the parents. Autonomy-supportive parenting behavior entails a bilateral agreement on rules carried out in the home. The parents promote child independence and exert minimal pressure on their children to act in a certain way (Holt, et. al., 2012). However, some studies indicated that autonomy- supportive parenting was only beneficial for Western cultures rather than Eastern cultures (Qin, Pomerantz, & Wang, 2009).

The quality of parent- child relationship will certainly impact on the child's emotionality. When a parent is loving and warm, then one can expect the child to be warm and loving as well. However, when a parent is cold, controlling, and neglectful, then one can expect the child's emotional state to be negative and cold as well. According to Gross (1986), there are two ways of regulating emotions: one is by cognitive appraisal, wherein an individual will change the meaning of the situation that will entail changes in emotional expression; another is by emotional suppression, when the individual attempts to control his emotional expression without changing the meaning of the situation. According to Gross, cognitive appraisal is associated with promoting positive health while emotional suppression is associated with depression- related symptoms. Another study indicated that harsh parenting may also lead to aggressive emotions and behaviors among adolescents (Chang, et. al., 2013).

The Parental Acceptance- Rejection Theory was initially developed by Rohner (1981). However, studies pertaining to parenting have been undertaken as early as in the 1930s, 1950s, and 1970s (Rohner, 2007). The most notable study has been the one by Baumrind (1966), which classified parenting styles into three: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. A fourth type was added by Martin (1970), termed as neglecting or uninvolved parenting.

Rohner identified his theory as a continuum. On one end was parental acceptance, which included warmth. He further subdivided warmth into verbal and physical behavior. Warmth is conceptually defined in the theory as manifestations of comfort, support, and love perceived by the child from parents and/ or caregivers. On the other end was parental rejection, which he subdivided into three: hostility/ aggression, neglect, and undifferentiated rejection. Hostility / aggression is defined as the perceptions of children for their parents and caregivers to be irritable, annoying, angry, resentful, and impatient, among others (Rohner, 2007). The third subdimension, undifferentiated rejection, referred to the lack of attention and warmth but was not supported by manifestations of hostility and rejection. He also subdivided each of these domains into verbal and physical behavior. The uniqueness of Rohner's theory lies in two facts: one, it was based on the perception of children, and their subjective perceptions are considered priority; another is that while Baumrind's study was not supported in Asian contexts (Rohner, 2007), the PART-theory is considered culturally sensitive as it has been conducted in both Western and Eastern populations, and the instruments measures has been translated to several languages worldwide, across 77 countries.

Rohner's theory has generated a significant number of studies that covered various populations and correlated with different factors. From self-concept, esteem, and self-efficacy (Khan, et. al., 2011), to parental control (Rohner & Petengill, 1987), and across populations: adults (Hussain & Munnaf, 2011), young adults (Khan, et. al., 2011), transgenders (Koken, et. al, 2009), and adolescents. Some studies have cited that paternal rejection is more critical than maternal rejection (Hussain & Munnaf, 2011) while other studies cite both paternal and maternal rejection as resulting in more negative perceptions in later adulthood that may lead to substance abuse (Campo & Rohner, 1998).

All these studies point to the same results: perceived rejection from parents result in poor adjustment and functioning, including depression, aggression & delinquency, emotional instability, and negative worldview (Rohner, 2004). Experiences of parental warmth and acceptance have also contributed to positive functioning in adulthood. However, Rohner has cited that adolescents experience both acceptance and rejection from their parents and it would be impossible to specify just one set of experiences as solely accepting or rejecting.

The PARTheory also includes two other subtheories: personality, coping, and sociocultural contexts. It is under these aspects that causes, correlates, and consequences of perceived rejection and acceptance determine future adjustment and functioning.

In the personality subtheory, "rejected individuals are generally expected to self-propel along qualitatively different developmental pathways compared to accepted or loved people" (Rohner, 2007). For one, people who perceive their parents to have rejected are more inclined to react in dysfunctional ways. They may become aggressive, withdrawn, and generally suppressive of their emotions. Perceptions of rejection may also cause physical impairment and imbalance within the nervous system. On the other hand, individuals who perceive their parents to as loving and accepting grow up to respond positively to people around them and situations they are confronted with. They are more likely to experience healthy socio-emotional functioning.

However, given the varying perceptions and relative experiences on warmth and experience, healthy or unhealthy emotional functioning may not follow an expected path. An individual who have experienced warmth and care may also have problems in emotional functioning and adjustment in the future. There is also the likelihood that children who experienced rejection may grow up to be adjusted and healthy individuals. This complicated statement also warrants further study as another factor apart from warmth may play a role in healthy development.

According to Deci and Ryan (2000) autonomy promoting behavior is something "volitional, harmonious, and integrative rather than pressured, conflicted, and alienating" (as cited in Joussemet, et al., 2008). As opposed to parental control, it fosters child independence as parents include their children in family decision-making, which has been found to be beneficial among American adolescents (Wang, Pomerantz, & Cheng, 2007; Smetana & Gettsman,

2006), and in the development of decision-making skills (Wray-Lake, Crouter, & McHale, 2010).

Autonomy in adolescents may be manifested in a number of domains (Wray-Lake, Crouter, & McHale, 2010). Personal domains include decision-making behavior that has bearing on personal aspects of life, such as appearance. Social-conventional domains cover cultural norms, in which families, communities, and society at large dictate. Prudential domains cover health and safety issues. Lastly, multifaceted decisions reflect overlapping domains, such as personal, with prudential, with social-conventional domains. Researchers have cited that autonomy is achieved earliest in personal domains and are least experienced in prudential domains. Lastly, the same study posited that autonomy is observed beginning in middle childhood.

Parental autonomy has also been studied among homosexual male adults. It was concluded that low autonomy supportive parenting results in non-acceptance of self, use of defensive strategies (specifically reaction formation), homophobia, and low self-esteem (Weinstein, et al., 2012).

The experience of parental autonomy may also vary with respect to culture. While American and European adolescents demonstrate more independence in their decision-making skills and differ from their parents, Chinese children demonstrate autonomy while they have internalized parental values and attitudes (Bao & Lam, 2009). Autonomy was also observed to promote emotional and academic functioning (Wang, Pomerantz, & Chang, 2007). However, perceptions of autonomy by these adolescents may be culturally different; but both perceptions appear to promote their well-being.

Emotional Regulation has been defined by Gross (1998) as “processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions”. Two responses have been attached to emotional regulation: reappraisal and suppression. Reappraisal involves changing the way a situation is perceived in order to decrease emotional impact. For example, when a child finds himself in the dark and is feeling scared, the parent helps the child by stating “there is nothing to be afraid of the dark. There are no monsters”. It is usually regarded as more positive than suppression. On the other hand, suppression is inhibiting the signs of inner feelings. In the same example, instead of supporting the child, the parent may state “you’re a big boy now, only babies cry in the dark”. Reappraisal is considered to be more beneficial since it decreases emotional experience, thereby promoting healthy development. Suppression, however, decreases emotional expression only, and not emotional experience. Further, reappraisal has not been found to affect memory, which is the opposite case with regard to suppression. However, both concepts have not been thought of as a continuum; depending on the situation, a person may employ both strategies to a certain extent, or may frequently use both, depending on the nature of the situation.

A warm and affective climate has been associated with mental well-being (Fry, et.al., 2011) and self-efficacy (Wills & Pkhrel et al., 2011). On the other

hand, poor emotional regulation resulted to poor academic competence, substance abuse, and delinquency (Wills & Pkhrel et al., 2011).

The present study investigated how parental warmth, autonomy, hostility, neglect, and undifferentiated rejection impact on cognitive appraisal and emotional suppression as strategies for emotional regulation. Past studies have focused on PART-theory and its application to subjective well-being, self concept, self esteem. The present study includes autonomy, which is a different construct but nevertheless is a popular topic in parenting studies. Further, the present study aims to measure its impact on emotional regulation strategies, specifically cognitive appraisal and emotional suppression, which has yet to be explored but finds tentative support within the PARTheory. Since the Emotional Regulation theory specifically states that the two are not treated as a continuum, this study will attempt to study both strategies in a continuum context. Adolescents were the chosen respondents to this study since this developmental stage is full of conflicts and crises as described in various developmental theories. Lastly, it is hypothesized in this study that positive perceptions of parents contribute to positive emotional functioning and vice versa.

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a significant correlation between perceived positive parental behavior and cognitive reappraisal?
2. Is there a significant correlation between perceived negative parental behavior and emotional suppression?
3. Are there significant correlations between warmth/ acceptance and autonomy?
4. Are there significant relationships among hostility, neglect, and, undifferentiated rejection?
5. Is there a significant negative correlation between cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression?

The following hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance: (1) Perceptions of autonomy- promoting and warm parental behavior predict healthier emotional regulation strategy (Cognitive Reappraisal). (2) Perceptions of hostility, neglect, and undifferentiated rejection predict unhealthier emotional regulation strategy (Emotional Suppression).

The study employed a correlational design. It sought to determine significant correlations among the variables of warmth, autonomy, hostility, neglect, and undifferentiated rejection.

Method

Participants

The present study included 219 respondents from Don Bosco Technical College in Mandaluyong City. All of them were informed about the nature of the research, the objectives of the study, and that their individual responses will

remain confidential. The Office for Student Affairs was responsible for the test administration.

Instruments

In order to obtain the results of the study, a self-made questionnaire entitled “Parental Behavior Questionnaire”, and the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire were used.

The Parental Behavior Questionnaire is a 50-item self-report scale that has a likert scale of 1-4. The higher the score, the more the parent is perceived as warm, accepting, and autonomy promoting, while the lower the score, the more the parent is perceived as rejecting (hostile, neglect, and undifferentiated rejection). The questionnaire was loosely based on the Parental Acceptance Rejection Theory by Rohner. However, the questionnaire included items related to Autonomy, which was not included in the theory. Cronbach’s alpha for warmth and autonomy were computed at .76; for hostility, .86 was computed; for neglect, it was .77; and lastly for undifferentiated rejection, it was .69. Based on the Cronbach’s alpha, all domain items indicate acceptability. Further, based on the confirmatory factor analysis, item 4 (under warmth), item 34 (neglect), and item 44 (undifferentiated rejection) did not load on their domains, thus they were removed from the final data analysis. Based on the RMSEA obtained which was below .08 (.066), the data gathered has a good fit with the theoretical model the instrument was based on.

The Emotional Regulation Questionnaire developed by Gross is composed of 10 items that has a likert scale of 1-5. The higher the obtained score, the more the person is predisposed toward either strategy. It is composed of suppression and reappraisal domains. Cronbach’s alpha computed for this test is .752, indicating acceptability.

Procedure

The data was gathered during the third week of March 2012. In coordination with the Office of Student Affairs of Don Bosco Technical College, instructions were given to the staff as to how the tests should be administered. The instruments were distributed over general education classes, with the OSA staff administering the tests in the presence of the professor in charge. They were informed about the nature of the research, and instructions were given to them. Questions and queries were entertained by the examiner during the test-taking. The tests were accomplished in approximately 30 minutes, after which the respondents submitted the questionnaires to the examiner. The researcher collected the accomplished instruments after a week.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the results, the mean and standard deviations were obtained from each factor. A correlation matrix was also derived to show whether

significant correlations existed within factors. Lastly, path analysis was conducted to determine the effects of parental behavior on emotional regulation.

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations obtained across the various domains included in this study. Based on the values obtained, majority of the respondents perceive their parents as more warm and autonomy-promoting, as opposed to being hostile, neglecting, and rejecting. The respondents slightly favor cognitive appraisal as opposed to emotional suppression.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	M	SD
Warmth	219	3.07	0.50
Autonomy	219	3.09	0.52
Hostility	219	2.29	0.83
Neglect	219	2.47	0.75
Undiff. Rej.	219	2.48	0.81
C. Appraisal	219	5.00	1.00
E. Suppression	219	4.53	1.04

Given that the respondents are already in their second year or college, they may have curbed their emotional impulsivity and have settled into more mature roles. Further, their advanced ages may also contribute to a more positive appraisal of their parents' behavior, brought about by maturity and understanding.

To determine whether there are significant relationships between warmth and autonomy, hostility, neglect, and undifferentiated rejection, and cognitive appraisal and emotional suppression, the following table is presented:

Table 2
Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Warmth	---						
Autonomy	.656**	---					
Hostility	.18	.26	---				
Neglect	.22	.27	.94**	---			
Undiff. Rejection	.22	.31	.88**	.94**	---		
C. Appraisal	.09	.22	.14	.14	.15	---	
E. Suppression	-.07	.10	-.01	.01	.04	.49**	---

** $p < .01$

Based on table 2, significant correlations exist among the variables within each domain, all of them significant at the .01 alpha level. Given that warmth and autonomy are supposed to correspond to parental acceptance and hostility, neglect, and undifferentiated rejection as corresponding to parental

rejection, the close correlations somehow signify that these variables belong to each other to their respective domains. With regard to appraisal and emotional suppression, the close correlation between these two, despite contrasting definitions, suggest that both strategies are employed by the respondents. Given that the emotional regulation theory by Gross did not treat these two concepts dichotomously, along a continuum, it means that the respondents may be equally predisposed to use both, that may be dependent on the nature of the situations they are experiencing.

Lastly, regarding the effect of parental behavior on emotional regulation, the following diagram is presented on the next page.

Based on the diagram, small effects were observed for majority of the variable domains. The effect of warmth on cognitive appraisal is only $-.10$, while a bigger effect was observed for suppression at $-.24$. Autonomy generated $.25$ for both appraisal and suppression. Hostility generated a $-.01$ effect on cognitive appraisal and $-.27$ on suppression. Neglect generated a $.08$ effect on appraisal and $.10$ on suppression. Lastly, undifferentiated rejection generated a $.03$ effect on cognitive appraisal and a $.16$ effect on suppression.

Among all effects measured, only autonomy generated the biggest effect on both suppression and cognitive appraisal. It could be hypothesized that despite their perception of their parents as autonomy-promoting, they are both predisposed to use emotional suppression and cognitive appraisal as their strategies in emotional regulation. It could also be implied by this finding that when parents are perceived to be autonomy supportive (meaning they value child independence and foster bilateral decision making with their children), the child may be skilled in using both strategies for beneficial effects; in the case of cognitive appraisal, this may be used when dealing with positive affect and suppression when dealing with negative emotion. This finding is supported by Gross (1998) in which he states that parents are the primary enforcers of emotional regulation in their children.

While negligible effects are reported for neglect and undifferentiated rejection, there is a substantial negative effect for warmth and hostility to emotional suppression. One possible explanation for this is that emotional regulation is also triggered by situational perceptions; indeed, how the person perceives his immediate situation may predispose him to suppress his emotions, especially negative ones, rather than expressing them. It can also be surmised that when parents sympathize with their children's emotions, the child may opt to avoid expressing his feelings, thus suppression. Given that majority of the respondents in this study are males, this may be one of the coping strategies they employ in managing their emotions.

However, the same argument cannot be applied for hostility, as the negative value suggests that the more the children perceive their parents as hostile, the less likely they will use suppression. Thus, what is likely is that children will fight back, thereby expressing anger. This could be a function of suppression; instead of controlling anger, they are more likely to let it out. As Gross cited, suppression is often associated with negative outcomes; thus anger, while being expressed, can be suppressed patience.

Lastly, the path model used in this study indicated goodness of fit, as evidenced by a Jöreskog-Sörbom Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) model value of .904 and Bentler- Bonnet Normed Fit Index (NFI) value of .923. Both models indicate that obtained values higher than .9 are generally considered to be well- fitting.

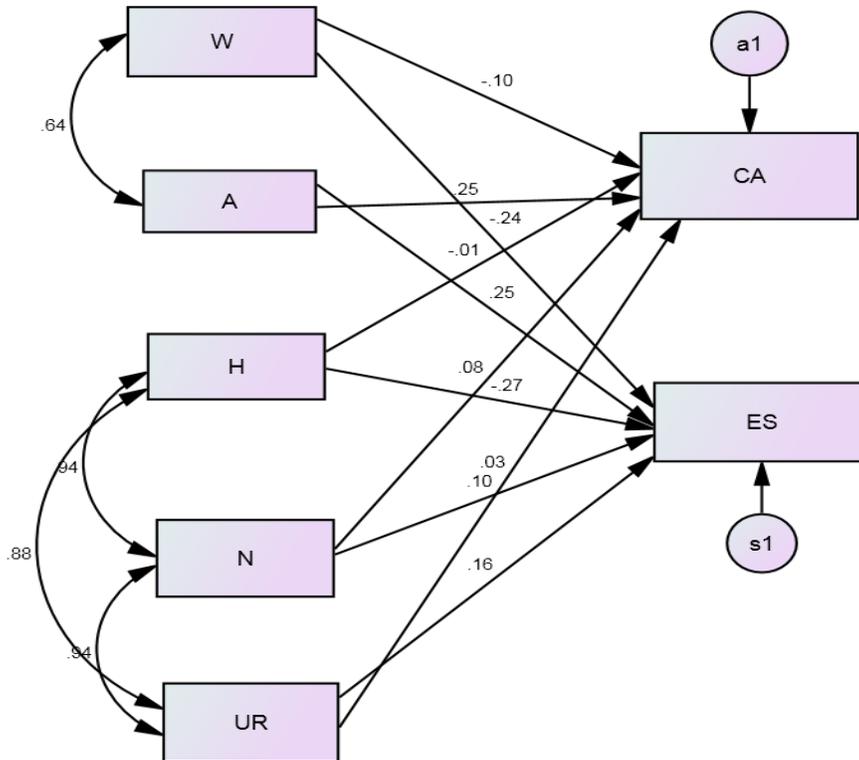


Figure 1. Path Analysis of Parental Behavior and Emotional Regulation

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of parental behavior on adolescent emotional regulation. It specifically aimed to determine whether perceived positive parental behavior resulted in cognitive appraisal and perceived negative parental behavior resulted in emotional suppression. The study went a step further by hypothesizing negative correlations between perceived positive parental behavior and emotional suppression and perceived

negative parental behavior and cognitive appraisal. This was indicated in the study's hypotheses. The study also aimed to determine correlations among constructs within assumed domains: warmth and autonomy; hostility, neglect, and undifferentiated rejection; and, a negative correlation for cognitive appraisal and suppression.

There were significant correlations found among the variables in the study; thus, the constructs of hostility, neglect, and undifferentiated rejection certainly fit within the parental rejection domain of the PART- theory. Autonomy, while not a part of PART- theory, is significantly correlated to warmth, thereby establishing its positive nature.

However, no negative correlation was found for cognitive appraisal and suppression. This finds support in how Gross conceptualized his theory; that the two are not dichotomous parts of a continuum but rather two distinct strategies that may be employed by the individual, depending on the situation.

Lastly, the path model, established to have a good fit by GFI and NFI models, have found small effects across for warmth, autonomy, and hostility, on both cognitive appraisal and emotional suppression. Thus, both hypotheses are rejected since positive and negative parental behavior did not establish positive nor negative correlations for both emotional regulation strategies.

Based on the results of the path model, autonomy can be incorporated into the PARTheory as it may serve as another construct that is not covered within the warmth dimension. Experiences of love and support may be different from perceptions of control and independence. While parents may show warmth and love to their children, this can also be manifested in parents exercising excessive control over their children. For one, they can reason out that they are protecting their children from harm that may befall them. While this can be construed as parental control or dominance, this can be an indicator of love as well. Another aspect is when parents let the child make their own choices; he can interpret this as a sign of neglect or lack of care from the parents. Asian children may have imbibed parental wishes within their value system while at the same time manifest autonomy in their behavior. Significant correlations found between these two variables can also serve as further proof of this comfortable partnership.

Based on the above results, it can be concluded that emotional regulation is not solely a function of parental behavior. As individuals grow up, their behavioral and emotional functioning may be impacted by environmental factors uncovered in this study. Further, their personality traits and other intrinsic factors may play a hand in their emotional regulation and coping. However, autonomy did produce a positive effect on both cognitive appraisal and suppression, indicating that promotion of child independence may predispose the adolescent to deal with situations based on his personal perception. Hostility has also proven to be detrimental to emotional regulation and parents should be advised to refrain from punitive and degrading behavior toward their children. The same can be said for autonomy; parents are advised to include their children in decision making channels that may foster healthy functioning an adjustment in the future.

Given these findings, it is suggested that in future studies, both fathers and mothers, and differences in gender can be included so as to yield more significant and relevant findings in the future. Lastly, post- hoc analysis to determine discriminant validity between warmth and autonomy can be employed, given the high correlation of these two constructs.

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Appendix 1 Perceived Parental Behavior Questionnaire (Adapted from PARQ)

The following pages contain a number of statements describing the way mothers sometimes act toward their children. I want you to think about how each one of these fits the way your mother treats you.

Four descriptions are drawn after each sentence. If you think your mother almost always treats you that way, put an X in the box ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE; if the statement is sometimes true about the way your mother treats you then mark SOMETIMES TRUE. If you feel the statement is basically untrue about the way your mother treats you then ask yourself, “Is it rarely true?” or “Is it almost never true?” If it is rarely true about the way your mother treats you put an X in the box RARELY TRUE; if you feel the statement is almost never true then mark ALMOST NEVER TRUE.

Remember, there is no right or wrong answer to any statement, so be as honest as you can. Respond to each statement the way you feel your mother really is. Your response will be kept confidential. Thank you!

STATEMENTS	True of my Mother		Untrue of my Mother	
	Frequently True	Sometimes True	Rarely True	Almost Never True
1. My mother compliments me.				
2. My mother praises me to other people.				
3. My mother allows me to make major decisions about the way I look.				
4. My mother does not meddle in my choice of friends and romantic partners.				
5. My mother severely punishes me, even for a small mistake.				
6. My mother complains about me to other people.				
7. My mother is not available when I need her.				
8. My mother does not listen to the things I say.				
9. I feel my mother would not be bothered if I drop out of school.				
10. I feel my mother would not give me any advice.				
11. My mother hugs and kisses me.				
12. My mother talks to me in a loving way.				
13. My mother respects my opinion, even if her opinion is different from mine.				
14. My mother consults with me before making any decision.				
15. My mother always threatens me, even when I'm not doing anything wrong.				
16. My mother embarrasses me in front of other people.				
17. My mother has no time to talk to me.				
18. My mother would rather work than talk to me.				

Cont. Appendix				
19. I feel hurt when my mother does not share her problems with me.				
20. I feel my mother avoids me.				
21. My mother is interested in what I do.				
22. My mother likes to spend time with me.				
23. I can freely express my opinions to my parents, regardless of their reactions.				
24. My mother trusts me to make the right decision.				
25. More often than not, my mother hurts my feelings.				
26. My mother is often unkind towards me.				
27. My mother is not concerned about what I do.				
28. My mother would rather be with other people than to be with me.				
29. I feel my mother does not trust me to make the right decisions.				
30. I feel that my mother does not care about me.				
31. My mother shows her love to me through her actions.				
32. My mother comforts me when I am sad.				
33. My mother allows me to go out with my friends.				
34. My mother does not control my actions excessively.				
35. More often than not, my mother makes me feel I did not meet her standards.				
36. I often feel my mother does not appreciate the things I do.				
37. My mother does not ask where I go when I come home late.				
38. My mother does not bother to help me with school works.				
39. I feel my mother is too busy to think about what I need.				
40. I feel I am not prioritized by my mother.				
41. My mother takes care of me.				
42. My mother values my opinions.				
43. My mother talks to me as an adult, not as a child.				
44. My mother never forces me to tell her what I do.				
45. I feel my mother would just laugh if I say I love her.				
46. I feel my mother would push me away if I try to hug her.				
47. My mother ignores my presence in the house.				
48. My mother doesn't go to my school activities, even if parents are invited.				
49. I feel my mother wants to get rid of me.				
50. I feel my mother does think about me.				

Appendix 3 Model Fit Summary

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.103	.904	.615	.226
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.224	.486	.314	.364

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.923	.769	.929	.783	.928
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000