ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PARENTAL REFLECTIVE FUNCTIONING, PARENTAL DISTRESS AND PARENTAL WARMTH: THE ACTOR-PARTNER INTERDEPENDENCE MODEL

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In the process of raising children, the parenting pressure of parents perceived and the warm parenting behavior they performed have important impacts on the healthy development of children. Previous studies have found a link between parental reflective functioning (PRF) and parental distress. The PRF can promote maternal sensitivity, then mothers tend to perform appropriate parenting behavior for the child. However, little is known about whether the relationship between PRF, parental distress, and parental warmth of one parent could be affected by those of the other. To address this issue, this study aimed to examine the association between parental reflective functioning, parental distress and parental warmth in paired data from fathers and mothers using the actor-partner interdependence model.

The data were collected from self-reported questionnaires that were completed by 1,137 couples whose children were fourth-graders from six primary schools in Beijing. They were asked to complete the Parental Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (PRFQ; Luyten et al. 2017), the Parenting Stress Index (PSI; Abidin, 1995) and the adaptation questionnaire of the Child - Rearing Practices Report (CRPR; Chen, Liu, & Li, 2000).

Results from actor-partner interdependence analysis indicated that:
1. For parental warmth, each dimension of mothers’ PRF can predict not only their own parental warmth, but also fathers’ parental warmth. Specially, mothers’ use of prementalizing modes of reflecting upon their child (PM) can negatively predict warm parenting from mothers and fathers, and mothers’ interest and curiosity in children mental states (IC), certainty about children mental states (CM) can positively predict warm parenting from mothers and fathers. However, fathers’ PRF only predicted their own parental warmth.
2. For parental distress, both PM and IC of mothers and fathers have the actor-partner interdependence effect. CM of mothers had the actor-partner effect, but CM of fathers only had the actor effect.

These results showed that actor-partner effects are different between PRF and parental distress, parental warmth, which could be discussed more in further research.