WORK STRAIN AND GAINS ON FATHER INVOLVEMENT: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PATERNAL STYLES

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Keywords: Fatherhood, father involvement, work, family

Over the past years the role of fathers on children’s life has emerged as a relevant topic. However, father involvement happens in varied family ecosystems, being influenced by diverse aspects, namely the ability to conciliate work and family demands. Indeed, the balance between work and family is described as one of the main challenges of parenting, not being expectable that all fathers are involved in the same manner. Hence, paternal styles may contribute to clarify these differences. This study aims to examine how different paternal styles (i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) mediates the influence of father’s work strains and gains on his involvement with childcare.

A sample of 520 Portuguese fathers answered to a set of measures assessing work strains/gains, paternal styles, and FI. On average fathers were 36.39 years-old (SD=7.16), 93.3% were married and work a daily average of 7.78 hours (SD=11.67). Children’s age was 8-70 months (M=54.74; SD=13.14).

Structural equation modelling, using maximum-likelihood estimation, examined the mediation role of parental styles between the association of fathers’ gains/strains at work and his involvement with the child. Parents’ age, education, child’s sex and age were not included in the model due to non-significant correlations. The model provided good fit indices. Results revealed that fathers’ strains/gains at work were related to FI through parental styles. Specifically, strains at work were associated with less authoritative parental style but related to lower father involvement (indirect effect=-.019, SE=.01; p<.01, 95%CI -.045, -.005). Otherwise, father’s strains (indirect effect=.012, SE=.006; p<.05, 95%CI -.003, -.028) and gains (indirect effect=.019, SE=.007; p<.001, 95%CI.008, .035) at work were related with an authoritarian style, increasingly father involvement. Findings contribute to work-family interface studies by showing how parental styles play an important role to mediate environmental challenges on father involvement.