

## Worldwide Implications of Parental Love and Lack of Love on Children's and Adults' Psychological Adjustment and Maladjustment: Meta-analytic Evidence

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### Short Communication

Interpersonal acceptance and rejection theory (IPARTheory) predicts that perceived parental acceptance (love) and rejection (lack of love) have universal consequences on children's and adults' psychological adjustment and maladjustment [1]. To test these predictions, so far 12 meta-analyses have been conducted [2]. These meta-analyses are based on a total of 551 studies conducted over period of 41 years (1975-2016). These studies represented an aggregated sample of 149,440 respondents including children and adults. The respondents were taken from 31 countries in five continents (i.e., Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America). The countries are: Bangladesh, Barbados, China, Colombia, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Greece, India, Iran, Jamaica, Japan, Kuwait, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, South Korea, Serbia, Spain, St. Kitts, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, and the USA. The overall results of these meta-analyses confirmed that there are significant relations between parental love and psychological adjustment, and parental lack of love and psychological maladjustment of children and adults regardless of differences in races, ethnicities, cultures, age, gender, and geographical boundaries [3]. Results also showed that perceived parental love accounts universally about 26% of variability in children's psychological adjustment and about 21% of variability in adult's psychological adjustment [4].

Moreover, serious and chronic parental lack of love in childhood appears to have severe and longer-lasting emotional, social, cognitive, behavioral, and neurobiological effects on children and adult offspring than do perceived lack of love in other attachment relationships throughout life [5].

The majority of studies that assess the relation between parental lack of love and psychological maladjustment tend to focus predominantly on the influence of mothers' behavior even though fathers' are often as strongly implicated as mothers in many developmental outcomes. A large number of studies show that perceived *paternal* love often has as strong or even stronger implications than perceived maternal love for children's positive developmental outcomes, including psychological adjustment [6]. Results of a meta-analytic review have shown that father love has a significantly stronger relation with children's psychological adjustment than mother love cross-culturally [7]. However, perceive maternal lack of love has significantly stronger relations with children's psychological maladjustment than perceived paternal lack of love [8].

To sum up, nearly 4,000 worldwide studies on the implications for love and lack of love of children by parents suggest the following important messages for professionals and practitioners globally [9].

1. Children's feelings of being loved, cared, and appreciated by parents are likely to have greater developmental outcomes than any other single parental influence.
2. As every cultural and ethnic group has its own ways of communicating love and affection, parents of a particular

culture should find culturally appropriate ways to communicate love, warmth, and affection. Moreover, parents should avoid behaviors that indicate coldness, hostility/aggression, and indifference/neglect that induce a feeling of rejection in children.

3. Compared to children who feel loved, children who feel unloved are likely to develop a pattern of psychological maladjustment, and personality dispositions including hostility/aggression, dependence, low self-esteem, low self-adequacy, emotional unresponsiveness, emotional instability, negative worldview, anxiety, and insecurity.
4. Children who perceive themselves to be rejected or unloved are also likely to develop behavioral problems, conduct disorders, delinquency, substance abuse, and depression.
5. Father's love related behaviors often have as strong or even stronger implications for children's psychological adjustment, personality and socio-emotional development than do mother's love.

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