

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MATERNAL — CHILD INTERACTION BETWEEN HIGH AND LOW SOCIAL ECONOMIC GROUPS

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There is little doubt that maternal-child interaction plays a very important role in child development. Most domestic studies utilize questionnaires to assess parenting attitudes. This study was aimed at developing an observational measurement, which could be adapted by health professionals to clinical or community services and could be used to provide advanced knowledge of parenting educational needs.

The specific goals of this study were: 1) to develop two observational measurements, the "Life Interaction Scale" (LIS) and the "Teaching Scale" (TS); and 2) to understand the influence of socio-economic factors on maternal-child interaction. In this study, a quantitative research design was used. The subjects, recruited from kindergartens, were from 34 families with a high socio-economic status and 30 families with a low socio-economic status. Both groups included the same number of boys and girls. Half of the children were aged from 2 to 3 years, and the other half were aged from 4 to 5 years.

With the consent of the teachers and parents, nurses observed and assessed the mater-

nal-child interactions at the clients' home during a time when the children were eating or were being taught.

The results showed: 1) the observational tools of the LIS and the TS in this study were supported by satisfactory inter-rater agreement; 2) better maternal-child interaction (LIS and TS) was observed in families with a higher socio-economic status; 3) more positive, warmer and encouraging maternal attitudes facilitated more positive and spontaneous attitudes and less activity in children, according to the LIS; and 5) there were no significant associations between maternal and childhood behavior in the TS.

The contributions of this study are the development of observational measurements, and an understanding of the influence of socio-economic status on maternal-child interactions. Health personnel can use these tools to assess maternal-child interactions, to enhance positive interactions, to facilitate good child development, and to provide a reference for related research in the future. (*J Natl Public Health Assoc (ROC)*: 1993; 12(2): 164-176)

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