

Chapter I

Introduction

The family has always been recognized as one of the primary social groups and it is an accepted fact that the individuals who have the most important role in developing children are parents. They provide the child with affection, a sense of "belongingness", a satisfactory discipline, a working set of good physical, psychological habits and attitudes. The degree of adjustment children make outside the home is markedly influenced by the type of relationship they have in the home. It is the attitude towards the child i.e. love, affection, being wanted, appreciated, trusted and accepted as a person that determines how well the child will adjust outside the home.¹ Parents also set the atmosphere for moral and ethical standards, physical well-being, aesthetic appreciation, concepts of family living and philosophy of life in general.

A particularly important period in a child's life is preadolescence. Hurlock², discussing the preadolescence

¹ Hurlock, Elizabeth B. Child Development New York: Mc. Graw Hill Book Company, Inc. 1956, 481.

² Hurlock, Elizabeth B. Developmental Psychology New York: Mc. Graw Hill Book Company, Inc, 1959. 221, 246.

or puberty period (10 - 13 years of age), stated that" It is a time when the child is no longer characteristically a child because of the changes in his body and his behavior, nor is he yet an adolescent." This is a period of rapid psychological and physical changes. It is the transition from a childish body, a childish outlook on life, and childish forms of behavior to a mature body and to more adult attitudes and behavior. However, these rapid changes lead to confusion, feelings of insecurity and, in many cases, unfavorable behavior. Another change is the child's resistance to authority shown by his desire for isolation and withdrawal from family activities. Throughout childhood, there is a growing resistance to authority and an accompanying demand for greater independence. During this period the resistance is speeded up. In western culture, most notably America, conflict between boys and girls and their parents generally reaches a peak around the age of thirteen years. Most of the misbehavior so common at this age is of a minor type and comes from the child's attempts to resist authority. Therefore, it is natural that the parents would be annoyed and that they would punish the children in a variety of ways.

Specific Aim of the Study

A major goal in developmental psychology is to understand the effects of parental discipline upon children's

behavior. Yarrow³ stated that most of the data concerning parent-child relationship is obtained either through interviews with mothers or by the use of an inventory. This often produces inconsistent or uninterpretable findings. Therefore, this study is an attempt to develop a scale which will reliably measure Thai preadolescents' perceptions of parental punitiveness towards their aggression or attempt to resist authority.

Significance of the Study

Goodenough⁴ has pointed out that in a home where parents are overanxious and very much concerned about their behavior or where their disciplines are not consistent, the atmosphere of worry, anxiety and lack of a sense of humor, children would have more emotional problems and be more subject to temper outbursts than children from homes where parents have less tension. Children from the latter type of home will have fewer problems in adjustment. Construction of a scale concerned with punishment of parents as perceived by Thai preadolescents would represent a new trend in this

³ Yarrow, M.R. "Problems of Methods in Parent-child Research" Child Development, 1963, 34, 215-226.

⁴ Goodenough, Florence. Anger in Young Children Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931, 150.

field of research and might help us to better understand the parent-child relationship in Thailand.

Delimitation of the Study

This study represents an attempt to develop a parental punitiveness scale towards aggression as perceived by Thai preadolescents. The scale contains items which measure parental punitiveness towards physical, verbal, and indirect aggression in each of five major situations: aggression towards parents, teachers, siblings, friends and inanimate objects.

Definition of Terms

- Ethnic Thai:** any persons whose family background for three generations is wholly Thai.
- Private School:** refers to privately owned schools in Bangkok composed of students from rich families.
- Municipal School:** refers to municipal schools in Pranakorn District composed of students from poor families.

Related Literature

Much research has been conducted on the socialization of children's aggression. For example, Eron⁵

⁵ Eron L.d., Benta. T.J., Walder, L.O. and Laulicht, J.H.
"Comparison of data obtained from mothers and fathers on childrearing practices and their relation to child aggression. "Child Development, 1961, 32, 457-472.

found that there was high reliability in parental reports of discipline towards aggressive behavior. Epstein and Liverant⁶ found that the child will identify with the parent of the same sex. It was also suggested that parental warmth, awareness, salience and power contribute towards the development of a parent-child identification.

With regard to research in Thailand, Chuchit⁷ found that lower class mothers punish their children by beating them when they do not behave themselves, and use the threat of further physical punishment if they do not behave in the future. Srisawadi⁸ found that both upper and lower middle class mothers also punished their children by physical methods, especially beating.

⁶ Epstein, R. and Liverant S. "Verbal Conditioning and sex-role identification in children." Child Development, 1963, 34, 99 - 106.

⁷ Chuchit Pitakpol. "Child-rearing Practices of Lower Class Families in Bangkok and Dhonburi" Master's Thesis, College of Education, Prasarnmitra, 1962, 159.

⁸ Srisawadi Chulawisut, "Child-rearing Practices of Middle Class Families in Bangkok and Dhonburi," Master's Thesis, College of Education, Prasarnmitra, 1962, 159.