

The Role of Infant Gender, Paternal Sensitivity, and Paternal Support for Gender Equality

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INTRODUCTION

- Some research suggests that fathers show less sensitivity to daughters than fathers show to sons (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2006).
- However, some research finds limited effects, such as gender differences that were only relevant in the parents and not the child (Hallers-Haalboom et al., 2014).
- Others have found no differences based on parent or child gender (Branger et al., 2019).
- Exploratory research suggests that fathers may have less strict cultural norms for parenting and thus have different rates of sensitivity towards their children (Montgomery et al., 2016).
- Most research on parenting and sensitivity focuses on mothers, so we wanted to specifically target fathers.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Is paternal support for gender equality associated with paternal sensitivity and does this differ by the infant's gender?

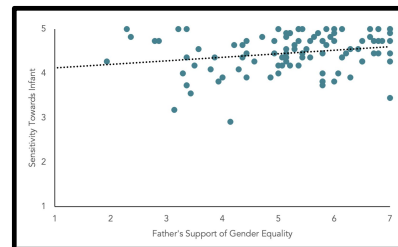
HYPOTHESES:

- 1) There will be a positive correlation between paternal support for gender equality and paternal sensitivity.
- 2) Fathers of sons will report higher sensitivity than fathers of daughters.
- 3) Greater sensitivity to sons versus daughters will be especially pronounced for fathers with a low belief in gender equality.

RESULTS

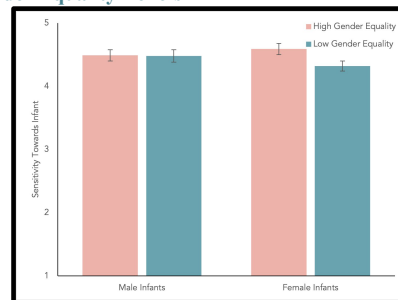
Results supported Hypothesis 1. There is a weak positive correlation between paternal support for gender equality and paternal sensitivity ($r = .22, p = .026$).

Figure 1. Correlation of Gender Equality among Men and Paternal Sensitivity



Hypotheses 2 and 3 were not supported by our results. Fathers of sons ($M=4.48, SD= 0.42$) did not report higher sensitivity than fathers of daughters ($M= 4.44, SD= 0.46$), $F(1,100) = 0.23, p = 0.64$. In contrast to our 3rd hypothesis, there was no interaction between fathers' support of gender equality and infant gender. Fathers with a low belief in gender equality did not show greater sensitivity towards sons ($M=4.48, SD= 0.39$) than fathers of daughters ($M= 4.32, SD=0.53$), $F(1, 98)= 2.12, p = 0.15$.

Figure 2. Paternal Sensitivity as a Function of Infant Gender and Fathers' Gender Equality Beliefs



METHOD

Participants: Predominantly White, college educated sample of 102 fathers with infants between 12-36 months (infant gender: 46% male, 54% female).

Procedure: Participants were asked to complete a Qualtrics survey answering the following:

- Infant gender
- 14-item Support for Gender Equality among Men Scale (Sudkämper et al, 2019).
- Shortened version of the Infant Crying Questionnaire (16-items). ICQ is a measure of parental sensitivity (Haltigan et al., 2012).
- Demographics

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