

Are Siblings Different as ‘Day and Night’? Parents’ Perceptions of Nature vs. Nurture

***Fatima Kamran, PhD**

Institute of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

The qualitative study explored parents perceptions and attributions of personality differences among their children. Twelve parents were interviewed using Interpretative Phenomenological Approach. The analysis revealed that the parents attributed the siblings’ personality differences to a combination of biological vs. psychosocial factors. It revealed meaningful insights as reflected by the themes that revolved around nature vs. nurture, psychosocial influences, parental identification and role modeling, gender, birth order and role expectations. Interestingly, despite sharing the same genetics, living in similar environmental conditions, children tend to display diversity in their behaviors and overall personality. Parents sometimes describe their children as opposite as ‘day and night’ which raises a question to investigate the factors that cause such extreme diversity in their personalities. There is a need to further explore parental expectations and criteria for an ideal child as well as knowing about the relative contribution of nature vs. nurture factors in determining personality differences.

Keywords. Perception of parents, attributions, children’s personality, siblings

Parent child relationship has been explored involving a variety of dimensions. There is considerable research, analysing the meaning of parents’ perceptions of child characteristics, particularly in the area of temperament. This study aimed to qualitatively explore parent’s understandings of perceived differences in their children’s personalities with reference to sibling comparisons. The parent-child relationship consists of a combination of behaviors, feelings, and expectations that are unique to a particular parent and a particular child (Willson, Shuey, Elder, & Wickrama, 2006). The relationship involves the full extent of a

*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Fatima Kamran, PhD, Assistant Professor, Institute of Applied psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.
Email: fatimakamran24@yahoo.com

child's development. The quality of the parent-child relationship is influenced by a multitude of factors, including; parent's age, experience, education, self-confidence, stability of the parents' marriage, beliefs and perceptions that determine their parenting styles as well as the unique characteristics of the child compared with those of the parent (Plomin & Daniels, 2011). Therefore, it is important to understand the dynamics underlying parental perceptions of their children's personality, the level of understanding and insight into their interests, abilities and behavior patterns (Birditt, Miller, Fingerma, & Lefkowitz, 2009).

Parents are well aware of the behavioral differences between their children. This is particularly true for dimensions of temperament. When asked about their children's temperaments, parents frequently remark about extreme personality differences in their children as they come from different families. It suggests that commonly siblings show no resemblance in their temperaments. However, behavioral genetic research consistently reveals that temperament is genetically influenced (Siegler, DeLoache, & Eisenberg, 2011). Therefore, genetically related siblings should show some similarity in temperament. Could parents be exaggerating the behavioral differences between their children? If so, do the observed relations between sibling differences in temperament and child outcome reflect parental expectations rather than actual child behavior? Qualitative studies can add rich meaningful insights to explore such dynamics.

Parental perceptions of their children's personalities and behaviors are also a reflection of the family processes that influence children's psychological well-being and subsequent development, but this impact is rarely studied (Shek, 2007). Drawing on family systems theories show how between- family, within-family, and within-individual differences emerge from family interactions that ultimately influence parental perceptions of the individual differences in their children's personalities (Solmeyer, Feinberg, Sakuma, Hostetler, & McHale, 2010).

Understanding a child's temperament and personality traits provides a framework for judging their behavior in a variety of settings over time and facilitates understanding of personality development. Parents can provide first hand information about the influence of various factors in causing personality differences among siblings. This knowledge of the extent of biological and psychosocial influences contributes towards explaining commonalities and differences found among siblings as perceived by parents (Pandey & Kumar, 2009).

Emmelkamp (2006) investigated parent-child interaction by studying how the parents categorize their child's behavior. It was found that the behavior emanating from the child is received as a series of impressions by the parent and then perceived as relevant or meaningful according to the cognitive organization or schemas of the parent. It means that a qualitative analysis of parents' attributions, understandings and beliefs depending on their schemas, can provide rich information instantly, but on the other hand, schemas can contribute to stereotypes and make it difficult to retain new information that does not conform to one's established schemas. It may cause the parents to identify and describe their children according to their preexisting concepts or apperceptions, past experiences and backgrounds that may or may not be the actual case (Whiteman, McHale, & Soli, 2011).

Some factors may influence behavior towards children. These may include; 'Relationship-driven effects'. These effects refer to the matching of parent-child characteristics. For example, perhaps the child's temperament does not match the parent's preferences or expectations (Feinberg, Solmeyer, & McHale, 2012). Another aspect may involve 'Parent-driven effects' which means that parents might treat their children differently for reasons of their own. A parent might have a particular reason for favoring or rejecting a particular child: for example, because the child was unwanted-its conception was unplanned (Eriksen & Jensen, 2009) Sometimes a child might be treated in a particular way by a parent, not because of that child's own characteristics, but because of the characteristics of his or her sibling. If parents find the first born to be 'difficult; they may have a tendency to consider their next child comparatively easy and vice versa and as a result, they would have a different attitude towards each child and consequently lead to increase preexisting differences between siblings (McHale, Updegraff, & Whiteman, 2012).

Rationale/ Significance of the Study

Phenomenological theories of personality focus on an individual's subjective experience of their world, that is, their phenomenological experience (Killoren, Thayer, & Updegraff, 2008). Particularly people's subjective experience, or their self-concept, is seen as the core of individuals' personalities. Since parents are generally the major source of influence in the early years of child development, the way parents deal with their children and provide a certain type of home environment influences their personality development (Kennedy & Kramer, 2008).

Parental influence is studied extensively, however, their attributions to these personality differences needs to be explored across different cultures. In Pakistan, the parent-child relationship involves parents in a more authority role, with prolonged parental responsibilities to cater for their children's needs, even when children become adults, which consequently develops reciprocal strong emotional bonding/ dependency and expectations. It is worth exploring how these expected roles of their children develop and how do most parents perceive and describe individual differences of children's personalities since an early stage.

Objective of the Study

The study aimed to focus on why and how parents tend to develop their perceptions about the personality, abilities and interests of their children to understand the Attributional styles that lead to comparisons and individual differences as perceived by the parents.

Method

A qualitative research approach was used for this study. The theoretical perspective most often associated with qualitative researchers has been phenomenology (Bogdan & Biklen, 2004). The phenomenological approach, was used to understand the factors attributed by the parents to individual differences in siblings personalities. Further, the context is important to the interpretation of data. This approach requires that the researcher "centers on the attempt to achieve a sense of the meaning that others give to their own situations" (Smith, 2007, p. 12).

The data collected in a qualitative study includes more than words; attitudes, feelings, vocal and facial expressions, and other behaviors are also involved. The data in the present study consist of interview transcripts. Three processes are blended throughout the study: collection, coding, and analysis of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This approach encourages the kind of flexibility so important to the qualitative researcher who can change a line of inquiry and move in new directions, as more information and a better understanding of what are relevant data are acquired (Brotman et al., 2005).

The study involved in-depth interview transcripts obtained from twelve parents (both parents of one family) that constituted the data for Interpretative Phenomenological Approach. A detailed analysis of the reported perceptions was carried out.

Sample

It comprised of twelve transcripts from a small scale qualitative project undertaken by the researcher. The inclusion criteria was to recruit parents with at least two children between the ages 2-12 years, with a maximum five year of age difference, in order to get a relatively homogenous sample to increase the likelihood of making comparisons among the siblings. The aim was to discern commonalities of view point and reported experience. A convenience sampling strategy was used; parents were recruited through the researchers' social networks. The participants were informed about the nature of research through discussion with the researcher and information sheets were given before they agreed to take part so that their decision to participate could be deemed 'informed'. The participants agreed to provide their data for non commercial research purposes with a condition to maintain anonymity. Both parents living together as married were included in the study, thus, excluding the single parents.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Case No.	Parent	Age	Education	Occupation	Monthly Family Income	No. of Children
1	Father	39	Masters	Banking	Rs1,95,000	2
2	Mother	32	Graduation	Housewife	NA	2
3	Father	37	Masters	Chartered Accountant	Rs.1,75,000	3
4	Mother	31	Graduation	Govt. officer	Rs. 65,000	3
5	Father	40	Graduation	Businessman	Rs.1,86,000	3
6	Mother	35	Masters	Education	Rs.45,000	3
7	Father	40	Masters	Business	Rs.1,00000	2
8	Father	36	Masters	Business	Rs.2,00000	2
9	Mother	29	Graduation	Housewife	NA	2
10	Father	44	Graduation	Govt. Officer	Rs.1,00000	3
11	Mother	42	Masters	Education	Rs50,000	3
12	Mother	39	Graduation	Housewife	NA	2

Research Design and Procedure

Data were generated through one-to-one interviews, with each participant being interviewed separately. A semi-structured but open ended interview schedule was developed on the basis of the research aims and existing relevant research literature. It began with broad questions regarding perceived differences between participant's children and progressed towards questions around explanations for these differences

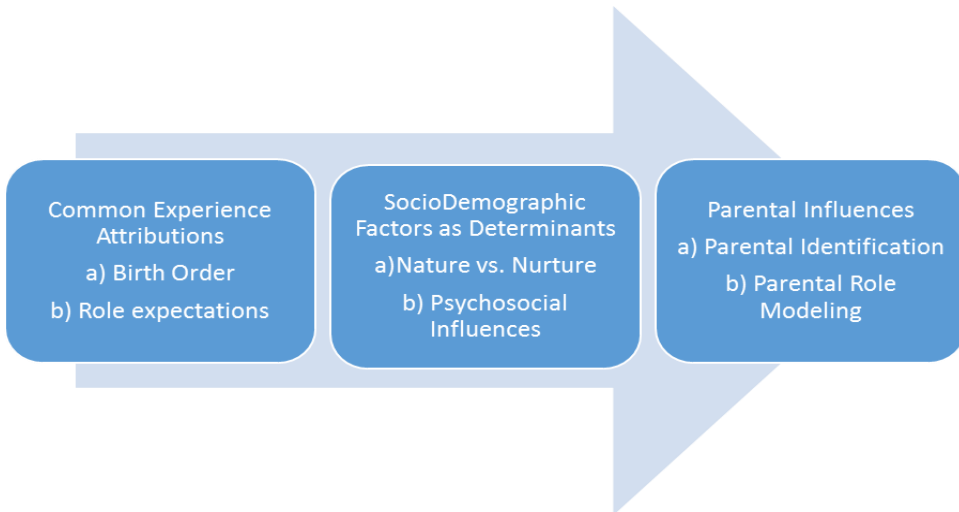
and perceived importance of birth order. This was piloted with one person who met the inclusion criteria as no amendments to the schedule were identified as necessary; the data from this interview were used in the study. The interviews took place in the participants' home and lasted around 30-40 minutes, with each participant interviewed by the researcher. Each interview was digitally recorded and then transcribed. Original names and identities were removed for the purpose of confidentiality. All interviews were tape-recorded and, based on four pilot interviews already conducted. The interviews were informal and open-ended, and carried out in a conversational style.

Analytic Procedure. Transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 2007; Smith & Eatough, 2012). IPA was particularly used because it provides a systematic way of analyzing qualitative data that aims to explore participants' experiences, cognitions and meaning making. At the same time in IPA, there is a recognition that the outcome of any qualitative analysis represents an interaction between participants' accounts and the researchers' interpretative frameworks. Hence, the analytic process used here is both phenomenological and interpretative as the focus of this study is examining factors influencing personality development which is While it is not claimed that the thoughts of an individual are transparent within verbal reports, analysis is undertaken with the assumption that meaningful interpretations can be made about that thinking (Smith, 2007).

The analysis involved reading all the transcripts thoroughly and making comments on the left margin. After analyzing the comments in detail, on the basis of commonalities and concepts emerging from the narratives, these descriptions were given theme titles as reflected in the comments. Initially a number of themes emerged which were gradually merged and categorized on the basis of similarities and common issues to constitute super ordinate themes to be discussed as main attributes of perceived personality differences. The researcher's interpretations and subjective accounts were described in main themes.

Analysis

The analysis revealed three major themes that emerged from the data: (1) Common Experience Attributions; (2) Demographic Factors as Determinants; (3) Parental Influences. (See Flow Chart 1)



Flow Chart 1. Reflecting Super Ordinate Themes

The subordinate themes are outlined below;

- Nature vs. Nurture
- Birth Order & Role Expectations
- Psychosocial Influences
- Parental identification and Role Modeling

Common Experience Attributions encompasses a combined contribution of genetics, and gender specific behaviors. The narratives reflected that the parents had some common experience attributions of their children's personality differences. It appeared to be a combination of biological vs. psychosocial factors. Interplay among the influences of; Genetics and demographics such as Gender, Birth order and Age stage interacting with environment was found. It can be said that in addition to predetermined factors, the children's personality differences were attributed to psychosocial and environmental influences causing idiosyncratic personality traits among siblings. It is not possible to categorize age, birth order and gender as purely biological, although these are predetermined, but they cause individual differences by their interplay and overlapping influences during the nurturing process. Parents' perceptions and parenting styles seem to be influenced by the child's genetics and social roles.

However, parents manifested a tendency to give a positive description of their children's habits and behaviors, reasoning the disruptive or negative behaviors with their age stage, gender and genetic influence. It appears like a parent stereotype behavior.

It appeared that the parents did not want to discuss the undesirable behaviors/traits of their children with strangers and manifested a defensive behavior. This trend was clearly reflected when a father spontaneously started off with a negative description but immediately modified on realization, into positive,

“A whole heap of trouble...that’s how I’d describe them...well they are good kids in their own way”.

Nature vs. Nurture. The parents perceived their children’s unique personalities and idiosyncratic traits as product of genetics interacting with psychosocial influences such as parent-child, sibling-sibling, and significant others interaction and life experiences. A mother attributed personality differences to nature-nurture interaction, saying;

“Nature vs. nurture thing comes into play in a big way...”

The same theme clearly emerged when another mother said;

“It’s a combination of what they get from us in genes and also how we and others influence them”.

Genetics were discussed to explain the common traits of parents and children. Parents identified their children by relating to each parent and family. A mother described her children saying that;

“Omer is more like Ali & Sara definitely takes after me”.

Genetic impact of relatives was also described to explain child’s behaviors when a father kept referring to his late brother having a similar personality as that of his son;

“Omer is more like my late brother” and concluded later that “I see some family connections”

It is evident that there is the genes rather role modeling as the uncle is not alive and the father is able to identify his son like his brother.

Environmental factors e.g. home, school/nursery, and resources available also contribute in personality development. Each child may have a different way of perceiving, reacting and adapting to these environmental stimuli. These factors were only pointed out by the mother in the end of interview seemed to develop insight and described these as relevant and significant.

Environmental influence is important but what is even more important seems to be parental influence. The effect that parents have on their children has little to do with those aspects of parenting that are experienced similarly by two children in their family. Whatever these parental influences might be, they differentiate rather than integrate the children. Parenting is likely to be an important source of environmental

variance only if parents differentiate their children (Plomeins & Daniels 2011). The most significant thing remains; how similarly or differently do parents treat their child that ultimately develops their personalities.

Psychosocial Influences. Besides genetics, psychosocial influences emerged as significant factor in determining personality differences among siblings sharing the same gene pool and home environment. The most important is the familial influence that affects each child in a unique way. The study reflects the ways in which children acquire traits, and learn to behave through role playing, modeling and identification with parents, siblings and relatives. The phenomenon of role modeling in acquiring skills, was revealed when a mother said;

“Second born following elder sibling as a role model,” younger sister had a role model and followed her...may be she saw the things Esha did and has learnt a great deal from that”.

This reflects that birth order contributes to learning and developmental processes. Particularly when the impact of birth order was described as a main factor, not for personality differences rather acquisition of skills. The achievement of milestones e/g walking and potty training was facilitated because of birth order.

The mother perceived birth order to be important in terms of comparison of advantages for the second born child who enters the family when parents become more experienced and confident in dealing with a child. The mother said;

“Younger one has had some more positive influences because she is the second attempt” and further clarified that;

“they learn quicker because of the influences around them....she is learning from Esha all the time but Esha has not that advantage”.

According to her, younger siblings are at advantage that parents are more experienced and second born has more opportunities, role models to follow and learn through elder's experiences rather experimenting, trial and error.

Psychosocial influence also involves the environment and living conditions that impact personality. Parents described the impact of early childhood experiences and home settings were perceived to cause personality differences due to different living conditions,

“...a more stable background might lead to a more stable outlook in a child”.

The father explained this in detail and said that despite living in the same area/ house, it made the child more stable and

"...their different experiences when they were very young".

Gender appears to be a key factor for differences in interests, abilities and behaviors.

Parents tend to attribute certain traits being typical of boys or girls. Gender accounted for differences in children's mental and physical abilities. A mother attributed mental abilities to physiological differences in genders when she said;

"...its just the male part of brain" and "Shan will be higher in I.Q than Shiza"

This reflects that some mental abilities are characteristic of male gender and gender differences do exist in thinking, physical & mental abilities, coping strategies and problem solving skills. She further elaborated that ;

"he does things in his own way..."

Roles adapted by siblings are also affected by gender stereotypes in a society and culture, as said further;

"She does so because she is a little girlie and girls try to grow up very quickly", typical sort of help, I am a lost little girl"

A mother also described her children as very different, and clarified this difference by saying that her son is very clever but in a very different way from his big sister;

"Ayesha is verbally clever whereas my son is very clever...he is very dextrous".

Gender specifies typical behaviors adopted by boys and girls, e.g. boys being more aggressive, physical and extrovert as compared to girls being more verbal and dependent which was reflected when the mother described her son being independent and explorative in contrast to her daughter who preferred doing things with support. She also perceived the boy manifesting physical behaviors in contrast to his sister who verbalizes things and can always be talked to ... and justifies behaviors with gender by saying he's a boy, he's much more boisterous she further emphasized this difference by saying,

"There is something physical he can do whereas Ayesha is much more spoken to".

It seems that children were mainly perceived to be different in terms of their behaviors and preferences besides interests and abilities strongly influenced by gender.

Parental Identification and Role Modeling. Parental identification and role modeling as well as genetic influence as a determinant of personality are reported by parents when the mother said;

“This is exactly what people used to say about me, so she is taking after me” it is further evident when she said “Shiza appears to be following me and Shan following Ahsan”.

The study reflects that parents also identify themselves with their children and relate their childhood experiences.

“It just took me back to my childhood”

The parents agreed that gender exerts significant influence by saying,

“I do think gender is quite key”

Parent's gender influences the parent-child interaction to a great extent. Parents tend to understand, nurture and cope better with same gender child. Children also adapt gender stereotype roles by identifying with the same gender parent in the process of nurturance. parents' gender facilitates understanding behaviors of similar gender child. The mother described common interests of father and son;

“Ahsan...tends to spend more time nurturing Shan...because of interests they have”

Role modeling also occurs in children with opposite gender to parents, as they may identify with any parent when the mother's account reflected parental modeling;

“...she gets that from her dad, he eats all wrong things and she just copies”.

This indicates that mostly children may identify with same gender parent but this may not be the case in some families where children may choose any parent, sibling or significant other as role model consciously or identify unconsciously.

Parenting styles appeared to be affected by parents' beliefs, and apperceptions along with their demographics and experiences with first born that develops more confidence in dealing with their second born. A father said,

“...our own confident as parents” reflected that parents tend to gain more confidence with time being an experienced parent.

Parents' apperceptions of children's personality differences seem to be assimilated and transformed by their past experiences. They tend to attribute their parenting styles, coping and nurturing strategies to their personal experience being a sibling and child, indicating that identifying these observed behaviors and traits with their own childhood experiences enabled them to identify causes of differences in personality traits of their

children. Parent's personality, background and childhood experiences affect their future coping strategies. A mother while describing her own personality and experiences as a sibling, said;

"...I am not the most patient person in the world and find it very difficult with toddlers...I had two brothers who drove me insane...i did find little boys harder to cope with...the same feeling came back..."

Birth Order and Role Expectations. Birth order is usually analysed in terms of defining a particular role of the sibling as expected by the parents and the cultural values. For example, elder siblings are expected to be more responsible and mature as they have parents as role models to follow. First born children also experience the trial and error parenting process as parents also learn to develop handling and coping skills over a period of time as discussed above.

The parents compared and contrasted the siblings' personality differences in terms of age closely correlating with birth order. They seemed confused in comparing the personality traits and particular behaviors of their children because they were on different stages of age. But all parents emphasized that age alone could not be an explanatory factor, instead, age correlates with gender and birth order, but most significantly with temperamental differences peculiar to a child, i.e. the idiosyncratic traits. Attributional difficulties were also manifested when parents tried to account for nature vs. nurture causing personality differences. It was reflected when a father said;

"They've got the same genes...so how come they are so different".

It can be said that parents found it difficult to categorically attribute the personality differences either to nature or nurturing influences and described the personalities as a unique combination of biological, psychosocial and environmental influences. It was difficult to explain if role adaptation, hobbies, interests and particular abilities are determined by gender, birth order and the age stage making it difficult and complex for the parents to point out a single key factor in accounting for personality differences.

In the process of personality development, which is a unique organization of relatively enduring behavior patterns, besides inheritance, each child was described to possess some idiosyncratic traits developed in the process of nurturance were explained as possible explanatory source of perceived differences among children. The parents' narratives

clearly revealed Attributional difficulties in accounting for idiosyncratic traits and the discrete influence of gender, age and birth order.

Discussion

This study explored parents understandings of their children's personality differences, focusing on birth order but addition of some significant influences could have contributed towards an in depth analysis and further understanding. The study evoked creative thinking and developed insight among the parents who had previously not thought of categorizing the reasons for the perceived personality differences among their children.

Psychosocial Influences on Child's Behavior. There were some significant omissions of influences on child's personality development, such as peer modeling, culture and media as well as exposure to technology e.g. computers and internet, which exert strong influence on child's temperament and behaviors, as each child may reflect a different attitude and impact of newer technology and resources available. Particularly, children's extra curricular activities, interests and hobbies are significantly influenced by media and computers. Keeping in view the present lifestyles, nurture also comprises of these recent developments acting as environmental influences not focused in this study which could have contributed further in analysis of perceived differences among siblings.

Only one mother discussed the impact of social environment, highlighting peer influence, when she said "...a great deal of influence going around, the kids, nursery, friends, nursery staff, school friends and staff." The role of peer group should have been an explanatory source beside others.

This study focused on birth order to account for personality differences which appeared as a correlating factor with age and gender instead of a single potential explanatory source. The role of sibling involves a focus on various aspects of sibling status, such as; sibling gender, birth order and age difference that affect a child's personality (Fingerman, 2003).

Sibling Interaction. Recent efforts to conceptualize the family as a system of interacting individuals include sibling interaction as a significant aspect in individual differences in personality development (Fingerman & Bermann 2000). The familial interaction involves mother-

child, father-child and sibling-sibling relationship, each exerting a different influence. Researchers have found about sibling's role as a teacher (Miller, 2005). This finding is also supported by the present study where parents described elder siblings as role models that facilitates learning processes, especially when a mother explained that since the younger sister had elder sister as a role model so she followed her

"...may be she saw the things Eshal did and has learnt a great deal from that".

It is important to analyse each interaction as a distinct experience as research shows that sibling interaction is qualitatively different from parent-child (Saudino, Wertz, Gagne, & Chawla, 2004) and peer interaction (Fingerman, 2004).

Human Agents. Social relational theory proposes that parents and children interact as human agents within a system of culturally embedded social relationships. Bidirectional influence comes about as parents and young or adult children acting as agents, interpret or construct meanings from each other's behaviors and anticipate, resist, negotiate and accommodate each other's perspectives during interactions. It also assumes that processes of contradiction such as conflict, ambiguity and ambivalence are inherent in parent-child relationships and give rise to qualitative change as parents and children mutually and continuously adapt to each other over time. The secondary analysis also revealed parents ambivalence and conflicts in describing their understandings of perceived differences.

Parents' Beliefs. Researchers studying parents' socialization aspects have also focused on parents' beliefs about their children define parent's beliefs as constructions of reality that are usually based on parents' knowledge of their children, which may or may not be supported by factual evidence and are subject to change. Parental perceptions and understandings of their children are essential for belief formation which was focused in our study to obtain qualitative information about parents' attributional styles (Mesurado & Richaud de Minzi, 2013).

The phenomenon of changeability is clearly reflected in the parents' description of their children's personalities in the present study, where parents' descriptions showed inconsistencies in their perceptions about the child's particular behavior and reason it with their age stage or idiosyncratic traits. The study could have been more comprehensive if, both parents were individually interviewed with the same questions. This

could contribute towards a more valid and reliable account and some insight into discrepancies in parents accounts (Solis, Shadur, Burns, & Hussong, 2012).

Child's Behavior and Activities. Socioecological influences are also reported to play a significant role in children's behavior and activities. Dwyer, Higgs, Hardy, and Baur (2008) in their qualitative study explored the attitudes, values, knowledge and understanding of parents and carers of preschool-age children in relation to physical activity and small screen recreation, to identify influences upon these behaviours. Factors influencing young children's physical activity behaviour included the child's personality, physical activity facilities available, and the perceived safety of their community. Factors facilitating physical activity included a child's preference for being active, positive parent or peer modeling, access to safe play areas, organised activities, preschool programs and a sense of social connectedness. The findings support the relevance of the socioecological model of behavioural influences to young children's physical activity which supports the significance of understanding a child's personality and preferences and how these develop in different types of environment.

Birth order has been focused as a significant factor in personality development, sibling interaction and parent-child relationship. Two children from the same family can develop very different personalities and ways of solving problems. Recognizing the immense influence of family dynamics on children, it can facilitate this understanding. Mostly, eldest children look to their parents or siblings as role models for their behavior, and may become perfectionist as parents expect them to act more maturely as compared to younger siblings. But the younger siblings may develop jealousy and sibling rivalry which are common consequences of birth order. Parents need to maintain a balance in dealing with children, e.g. child's perception of being neglected, and not given importance in family matters being youngest may hinder in a healthy personality development. Low self esteem, lack of confidence may develop due to skewed family dynamics. Therefore, parents need to develop insight about the significant impact of birth order on child's personality development.

Parents' perceptions of their children's personalities, abilities and interests were examined to understand various ways in which parents perceive and categorize children's behavior and the effect this perception may have on parental reaction to such behavior. They compared the

various ways in which mothers and fathers perceptually categorize the behavior of girls and boys. Statistical analysis indicated the existence of a strong evaluative dimension of a good-bad social behavior. Seven other psychological dimensions were also revealed. Moreover, fathers and mothers differed in their perceptions of the social behavior of boys and girls that confirmed gender differences. This finding suggests gender differences in parent's perceptions of their children's behavior which need further exploration to confirm the extent and validity of 'gender' as a significant factor in causing personality differences among siblings (Mesurado & Richaud de Minz, 2013).

Parents' Gender. In contrast to the above findings about the role of parents' gender and their perception of children's behavior, when examined parents' perceptions of their children's personality characteristics were examined in relation to children's abilities and interests in math, reading, music, sports and social activities, thus focusing on a wide range of abilities and behaviors. Factor analysis showed that there was a similar pattern of perceptions of children's personality characteristics among both parents, implying no impact of gender. Thus pointing towards a cultural diversity regarding gender differences in personality development. Gender as a single factors, may or may not have the same influence in causing personality differences (Cukrowiz, Taylor, Schatschneider, & Iacono, 2006).

Parents' Attitudes. Research indicates that parents' attitudes, expectations, and encouragement influence children's academic performance and competence in school (Plomin & Daniels 2011). To some extent, parents' attitudes are determined by their beliefs and expectations about a child's behavior and qualities. Therefore, it is theoretically and practically important to examine characteristics or qualities of children that are valued by parents. One possible way to understand such characteristics is to study the parents' perceptions of attributes of the ideal child. In the present study, parents' narratives confirmed that academic performance and achievement comprises an important aspect of parents' beliefs about their personality who tend to describe the perceived differences in terms of academic performance but some focus on their perceptions of ideal child could have added to our knowledge about desirable personality traits (e.g. obedience) among children.

It is important to investigate whether perceived behavioral differences reflect actual behavioral differences, researchers need to compare parent perceptions with objective measures of temperament. Saudino, Wertz, Gagne, and Chawla (2004) explored parent contrast effects for contrasting behavior dimensions including shyness and activity level and found that labeling siblings' temperaments as "active/not active" or "shy/not shy" on the basis of subtle behavioral differences provides parents with a heuristic for understanding and interacting with their different children. One sibling's temperament may serve as an estimate or bench mark for evaluating the temperament of other siblings. Alternatively, contrast effects might be due to the fact that parents value and seek to promote the development of the individuality of each child within a family. It would be interesting, therefore, to see whether contrast effects are apparent in parent ratings of sibling temperament in more collectivist cultures.

Most studies of child temperament suggest that sibling differences rely mostly on parents' perception and evaluations of their personality differences. If parent rating measures are prone to contrast effects, it might be due to parent expectations about their children's temperament, rather than actual child behavior, influencing these perceptions. Plomin and Daniels (2011) found that parents' perceptions of differences between siblings' were a more important predictor of adjustment and suggest that parents may label one child as maladjusted on the basis of perceptions of behavioral differences between siblings that are not objectively valid. Therefore, in an attempt to explore a potential consequence of parent contrast effects, it is important to examine whether the association between sibling differences in temperament and the quality of sibling relationships or differential parental treatment differ across parents. Parental Influence seems to be more important

The Ideal Child. Kavčič and Zupančič (2011) investigated parents' perceptions of attributes of the ideal child. The content analyses of the parents' narratives showed that four categories of attributes of the ideal child emerged from the data: family-related attributes (good parent-child relations and fulfillment of family responsibilities), academic-related attributes (good academic outcome, positive attitude toward studying, fulfillment of responsibility in studying, and high education attainment), conduct-related attributes (good character, self-discipline when going out, obedience to the law, no acquaintance with undesirable peers, and no naughtiness), and other attributes (such as having good

relations with others and being mature). No gender effect was evident regarding parents' perceptions of characteristics of the ideal child. The findings suggest that parent' perceptions of attributes of the ideal child are closely related to traditional values of their culture (Zhang, Kohnstamm, Lotboom, Elphick, & Cheung, 2002).

It is suggested that future qualitative investigations exploring perceived differences in siblings' personalities can include attributes of ideal child in an indirect way by exploring parents' expectations of their children's behaviors and achievements as an additional explanatory source and how the siblings differ in terms of expected roles in the cultural context.

Concluding Remarks. Parents' perceptions of their children's personalities, strengths and weaknesses develops on the basis of a variety of psychosocial and genetic factors. Parents tend to have a natural tendency and expectations for an 'Ideal child' and make efforts to describe their children closer to their own specific versions of an ideal child. They strive to achieve a concept referred to as an ideal child and thus make efforts to compensate the weaknesses, undesirable behaviors and attitudes of their children by rationalizing. It can be concluded that psychosocial influences act differently on each child of the same family, thus developing unique and diverse sibling personalities, sometimes as different as day and night.

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