Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Faculteit Psychologie en
Pedagogische Wetenschappen

Departement Pedagogische
Wetenschappen



Doctoraatsprojecten

Parenting of children with learning disabilities in Peru

Manrique Millones, Denisse 02 maart 2009

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Projectcommissie 02/03/2009 Pedagogische Wetenschappen

PARENTING OF CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN PERU

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In our doctoral research we seek to examine and discuss the relationship between socioeconomic, demographic factors, parenting behavior and learning problems in children within the Peruvian reality.

Based on the analysis of Fletcher concerning different models to define and classify learning disabilities, we will identify persons with LD using a combination of low achievement and response to instruction models (RTI). The first model identifies persons with LDs based on absolute low achievement; the second model bases identification on the assessment of (lack of) ability change. Besides this, the cultural-ecology perspective will provide a framework about the environmental influences on academic competencies and their acquisition.

Our sample will consist of 500 children between 11 and 12 years attending sixth grade. In order to test their academic achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, we will administer a standardized assessment battery, EVALUA-6. On the basis of these tests we will be able to divide the sample in three groups: children with learning difficulties (<pc 25), an average achieving group (with scores between pc 25 and 75) and an excellent achieving group (>pc 75). Besides, we will assess general intelligence by means of Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices.

In addition, we will assess behavior problems with Achenbach's instrument, the Teacher Report Form (TRF); motivation with the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey and child self-esteem with the Harter Perceived competence Scale. To measure parenting behavior and the developmental home environment, the Parental Behavior Questionnaire and the Early Adolescent HOME will be presented to parents and children. By examining the educational level, profession and income of the parents, the socio-economical status of the family will be defined.

The original instruments are mostly in English, so they will be translated from English to Spanish and then back translated. To analyze the data several statistical techniques will be used: analysis of variance, regression analysis and multilevel modeling

Based on the results, we want to formulate some suggestions concerning the communication networks "school – home" and the pivotal role they play in the development of learning problems in children.

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KATHOLIEKE
UNIVERSITEIT
LEUVEN

DOCTORAL PROPOSAL

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PROMOTERS: PROF. DR. P. GHESQUIÈRE & PROF. DR. K. VAN LEEUWEN

DECEMBER 2008

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Parenting of Children with Learning Disabilities in Peru

The topic of learning disabilities (LDs) has received considerable research attention in several academic disciplines, including psychology and educational sciences. Moreover, Osman (2000) stated, *"LDs are the most commonly identified developmental problems of childhood nowadays"* (cited in Lawrence & Greenhill, 2000, p. 34). For instance, in 1977, around 800,000 American children (1.8% of the enrolled school population) received services under the category of learning disabilities. The number increased to over 2.6 million in 2001, which represented 5.8% of the enrolled school population (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Despite its relevance, LDs is still quite a new topic in Peru. Indeed, there are no statistics on the number of children with LDs yet. However, some available figures shed light on the achievement in formal education. In Peru and other Latin American countries, the poor quality of formal education in elementary and secondary schools is one of the most serious problems to be faced. In comparison with Eastern European, Eastern Asian and more developed countries such as the US, Canada and Western European countries, Latin American countries exhibit the lowest educational attainment in adult literacy skills. The average years of schooling in Latin American and Caribbean countries is 5.9 years, while in high income countries the average is 9.5. Less than 25% of the labor force has a secondary education level compared with 43% in high income countries (Arellano, 2002). In Peru, only 52% of students starting primary education finishes secondary education, and from this group only 20.9% gets the secondary degree. The other 31.1% finishes its studies repeating at least one academic year (Ministry of Education, 2002). Within this percentage, it is essential to consider a group of children that might have learning disabilities but the exact number is unknown.

Children with learning disabilities may possibly undergo an emotional sensation of frustration, academic difficulties, feelings of being different, and peer rejection leading to low self-esteem, lack of confidence and motivation (Sideridis, 2003). Likewise, the

combination between school environment and the high level of stress makes school itself a risk factor to the child with learning disabilities (Bender, Rosenkras, & Crane, 1999). Furthermore, he or she is exposed to repeated academic failure and as a result students start to believe that regardless of the amount of effort they put in a task, they still will fail.

Moreover, as has been noted in a study conducted by Werner and Smith (2001) children diagnosed with LDs at age 10, continued having the typical traits, such as poor academic achievement, self-assurance, interpersonal adequacy, socialization, responsibility, achievement potential and intellectual efficiency at age 18. However, as times goes by, at ages 32 and 40, researchers found a substantial amelioration resulting in a successful adaption, three out of four of these individuals were satisfied with their job, marriage, children, and social life, and did not have any psychiatric problems.

Five clusters of protective factors appeared in the interviews and records of these resilient individuals. They had temperamental characteristics that helped them elicit positive responses from a variety of caring individuals, such as parents, teachers, friends, and life partners. They had realistic education and vocational plans and as children and adolescents they had regular responsibilities.

The care giving style of the parents, especially of the mother, was important. Self-esteem was nurtured and there was a sense of security in the home because of well defined rules and structures. Supportive adults (teachers, members of the extended family and youth leaders) fostering trust and providing role models had a significant impact (Werner, 1995; Werner & Smith, 2001).

These findings support the assumption that parenting can have an impact on children's development. A wide empirical history has attested how various parenting attitudes and practices influence child behavior and the development of either prosocial competencies or psychosocial maladjustment (Kotchick, 2002). Lengua (2006), for example, examined over a period of three years, the relations among demographic risk, growth in temperament, and parenting (rejection, inconsistent discipline). The results evidenced that both temperament and parenting contribute to child adjustment problems.

These studies revealed that the application of positive reinforcement in parenting practices open displays to warmth or affection. Evidence supporting this view has been found in having an active monitoring of the children's activities without using harsh or punitive discipline, leading, to adaptive child psychosocial adjustment such as a high self-esteem, positive peer relations and fewer child behavior problems

The purpose of this doctoral proposal is to examine and discuss the relationship between socioeconomic, demographic factors, parenting behavior and learning problems in children within Peruvian reality. The fact that Peru has many families living in poverty makes it interesting to analyze and study all these relationships in a profound way.

Studies show that low-income parents have a clear trend towards the use of authoritarian and punitive parenting style and are less likely to either support their children or provide them with stimulating learning experiences. Likewise parents have elevated levels of stress affecting their parental behavior (Bornstein, 2002). It is my intention to further investigate the connection between these family variables and characteristics of the child, all of it involved in an ecological model.

Literature also tells us that children with learning problems often display psycho-social problems (Rourke & Fuerst, 1991). They experience behavioral problems, have a low self-esteem or lose their motivation for further schooling and education. That is why we also intend to include these kinds of psycho-social variables into our research.

Some studies have found that children with learning disabilities (LDs) experience social difficulties with peers. Learning disabled children in mainstreamed classrooms consistently have been found to be less accepted and more rejected than their non learning disabled peers (Siperstein & Goding, 1983). Many learning disabled youngsters are aware of the impression they have on their peers. In fact the findings of Garret and Crump (1980) suggested that LD youngsters were more accurate than their non LD peers in estimating their social acceptance, which was significantly lower for the LD students.

Likewise, the detrimental impact of learning disabilities on motivation levels has been mentioned previously, which basically consists in reduced initiation of voluntary responding and is seen as a consequence rather than an antecedent of the expectation that outcomes are uncontrollable (Abramson, 1978). For instance, children at risk for reading failure tend to be less motivated to engage in reading tasks; these children hold more negative self-concepts (Chapman, Tunmer, & Prochnow, 2000), feel more helpless (Valas, 1999), exhibit less emotional self-regulation (Fulk, Brigham, & Lohman, 1998), and avoid reading activities (Salonen, Lepola, & Niemi, 1998) more frequently than their typical peers.

Evidence suggests that children with learning disabilities have more negative self-concepts than their non-disabled classmates (Bruininks, 1978). In particular some findings have pointed out that learning disabled youngsters perceive a lower social, academic, and general self-esteem than non-disabled youngsters (Gregory, Shanahan, & Walberg, 1985). The lower general self-esteem often noted among LD students also may be related to their poor academic achievement. Renick (1985) indicated that students with learning disabilities perceive their personal worth as being closely tied to their perceptions of academic competence in the regular classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Definitions of Parenting

Child and developmental psychologists, sociologists and educators have long viewed parenting and the family as the most significant influences on the developing child. Parenting has been viewed as an important source of "environmental" variability (Bjorklund, 2002).

The parenting environment covers not only the basis of activities and objects it contains or generates but the basis of its *instrumentality* for childcare and childrearing

(Korosec- Serafty, 1985). For individual parents, there is a sense of boundary to the spaces where parenting takes place, but what actually constitutes the boundary varies across parents and time, depending on a number of familiar, cultural, personal and child factors. I will explain this within an ecological framework but first I give a definition of parenting.

In general, parenting may be defined as "purposive activities aimed at ensuring the survival and development of children" (Hoghughi, 2004, p.5). Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviors working individually and together to influence child outcomes. At this point, we have to be clear about the differences between some concepts such as parenting behaviors, parenting dimensions, and parenting styles.

Parenting behavior is the most direct expression of parenting, that includes different kind of actions such as verbal communication (e.g. reasoning), corporal punishment (e.g. spanking), reward or withdrawal of reward or privilege (e.g. time-out or taking away something that she/he likes like television) (Socolar, 1997).

The first and one of the most important children's world experience stems directly from interactions they have within the family, this, long before they are old enough to enter formal or even informal social situations like school. In that context, Bornstein (1989) pointed out that their two caregivers figures are responsible for determining most, if not all, of their experiences. Parenting occurs in a broader social context in which community risks or resources, neighborhood quality, poverty, etc. may shape parenting beliefs and behaviors; in spite of this, little research has focused on the environmental and psychological determinants in parenting.

In the literature, two main **parenting dimensions** are distinguished. Parental Responsiveness, refers to *"the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands"* (Baumrind, 1991, p. 62). Parental Control was at first defined as a single dimension that ranges from excessive control to insufficient control, but in the early 1990s research has focused on differentiating among different

forms of parental control. The primarily distinctions are between psychological control and behavioral control. As described by Steinberg (1990) and elaborated by Brian Barber and his colleagues (Barber 1996, 2002), psychological control refers to parents' attempts to control children's activities affecting negatively their psychological world. Psychological control, including parental intrusiveness, guilt induction, and love withdrawal, undermines psychosocial adjustment and development by interfering with children's ability to become independent and develop a healthy sense of self and personal identity. In contrast, behavioral control is related to the rules or restrictions that parents impose their children and the supervision and management of their activities.

Concerning to **parenting styles** many writers have noted that specific parenting practices are less important in predicting child wellbeing than is the broad pattern of parenting. Most researchers who attempt to describe this broad parental milieu rely on Diana Baumrind's concept of parenting style. The construct of parenting style is used to take normal variations in parents' attempts to control their children (Baumrind, 1991). Darling and Steinberg (1993) consider the parenting style as the general context, the climate in which the more specific parenting practices are expressed.

Two points are critical in understanding this concept. First, parenting style is meant to describe normal variations in parenting, so the parenting style typology Baumrind developed should not include deviant parenting, as might be found in abusive or neglectful homes. Second, Baumrind assumes that normal parenting revolves around issues of control. Although parents may differ in how they try to control their children and the extent to which they do so, it is assumed that the primary role of all parents is to influence, teach, and control their children (Darling, 1999).

Maccoby and Martin (1983) differentiate between authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and indifferent parenting based on two parenting dimensions, i.e. 'demandingness' and 'responsiveness'.

Developmental researchers consistently have found that a particular aspect of parenting, referred to parenting style, is associated in a predictive way with a wide range of indicators of adolescent competence (Fletcher, 1999).

Parenting: An Ecological Perspective

The cultural-ecology perspective provides a framework of environmental influences on competencies and their acquisitions. This framework is derived from the work of anthropologist Julian Steward and his followers. They define cultural ecology as the study of institutionalized and social transmitted patterns of behavior interdependent with features of the environment (Netting, 1968).

The ecological perspective defines development as the change in the way a person perceives his or her environment and can connect or relate with it (Del Lujan, 2001) and conceptualizes parenting as a process, rather than a static entity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The environment is understood as the group of structures, in which each one can be inside of the following. In this perspective environments are not distinguished with reference in lineal variables but are analyzed in terms of systems.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) explains the importance for human ontogeny of the interrelated ecological levels, conceived as nested systems, involved in human development. Each of the ecological systems he describes is explained to have an important impact on the child, the parent, the family and the quality of life in society.

He describes the *microsystem* as the setting within which the individual is behaving at a given moment in her or his life and the *mesosystem* as the set of microsystems constituting the individual's developmental niche within a given period of development. In addition, the *exosystem* is composed of contexts that, although not directly involving the developing person (e.g. the workplace of a child's parent), have an influence on the person's behavior and development (e.g. the parent having a stressful day at work can result in a reduced capacity to provide quality care giving to the child). Finally, the *macrosystem* is the super ordinate level of the ecology of human development; it is the level involving culture, macro institutions (such as the federal government) and public policy. The macrosystem influences the nature of interaction within all other levels of the ecology of human development.

Belsky (1984) proposed a process model of parenting based on the child maltreatment literature, which examined the interplay between characteristics of the child (e.g. temperament), characteristics of the parents (personality, psychological functioning, attachment history) and the family environment (stress and support) in the determinants of parenting practices.

The Context of Parenting

A wide empirical history has explained how parents have to deal with limited resources for sustenance, poor child life expectancy and the use of children as cheap labour. Even in developed countries many parents still have to deal with pressure that has an impact on their effectiveness. Risk factors are (Hoghughi, 1999): (a) relative poverty, (b) ill health, both physical and mental, (c) greater tendency to separate and re-partner, (d) dispersal of extended families and support networks, (e) conflicting demands of work and home in increasingly competitive economic environments, (f) greater tendency of mothers to do paid work outside the home and having to contend with the physical and emotional consequences of work, (g) increasing unacceptability of traditional means of corrective discipline and uncertainties about appropriate boundaries for children's behavior, (h) increase of influence of peers and their culture, relative to that of parents, (i) greater awareness and empowerment of young people legally and informally, and (j) growth of urban environments and exposure of children to strong external influences, including advertising and the media.

Nowadays, researchers begin to analyze parenting differences based on social class, community context, socioeconomic status, race and other "ecological factors" (Kotchick, 2002).

Ethnicity and Culture

It is important to mention that parenting behavior is affected by cultural beliefs and heritage, as well as social factors associated with **ethnicity** (Forehand & Kotchick, 1996).

Ogbu (1981) introduced a model that intend to explain how parenting behavior is driven by the culturally determined child and adult characteristics considered necessary for survival and success. Moreover, following the same author, parenting practices are determined by the availability of resources in the environment that facilitate the development of culturally valued competencies and folk theories of childrearing that dictate the parental practices believed to be successful in fostering culturally valued child behavior (Ogbu, 1981).

Ethnicity or cultural heritage may affect parenting beliefs and behavior. For instance, parenting practices of African American parents are dually influenced by the resources and risks offered by their environments, as well as traditions of childrearing handed down across the generations (Franklin & Boyd- Franklin, 1985).

A study conducted by Lin and Fu (1990) compared child rearing practices among Chinese, immigrant Chinese and Caucasian American families showing that Chinese and Immigrant Chinese parents lay a greater emphasis on parental control and parenting strategies than Caucasian parents. Likewise, the authors concluded that their findings could be explained by the influence of traditional Chinese cultural values, such as those emphasizing education (Lin & Fu, 1990).

Neighborhood and Community

Parenting that highlights parental control and high parental expectations for respecting the authority have been found adaptive for children growing up in impoverished or dangerous neighborhoods (Lamborn, 1996).

Indeed, research has also provided evidence of how social and physical characteristics of neighborhoods contribute in the decisions that parents make about how to structure and regulate their children's activities (Burton, 1990). In addition,

Furstenberg and his colleagues (1993) cited: *"Where parents live affects how they manage their children"* (p. 254).

Ethnographic research suggests that parents who live in more impoverished or dangerous neighborhoods are less warm and more controlling with their children than parents who live in safer neighborhoods (Furstenberg, 1993).

Family Socioeconomic Status and Poverty

One of the most important adversities for families is **poverty**. This is not only because it has a direct impact on a number of resources and services which they might utilize for rearing their children, but also by virtue of the impact of poverty on the parents themselves and the way it affects their thoughts and feelings about themselves and their children.

In 2007, 39.3% of the Peruvian population was found living in poverty, that is, had a level of spending insufficient to purchase a consumer basic basket. The proportion of poor in the country is made up by 13.7% of extreme poor, people who have a less expenditure per capita than the cost of the basic basket of food, and 25.6% of non-extreme poor.

Comparing the figures of poverty between 2006 and 2007, it reflects a decline in the poverty rate at 5.2 percentage points. During these years, Extreme poverty dropped by 2.4 percentage points, from 16.1% to 13.7%. (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, I.N.E.I., 2008).

Poverty can be described in terms of whether it is "absolute", "relative" or "subjective" (Hagenaars & De Vos, 1988). Absolute poverty highlights a deficit in the minimum of basic requirements of food, clothing and shelter. Relative poverty is distinguished by the lack of access to regular commodities in the society, and is defined by a proportion of the average expectations for that society. Subjective poverty is a personal feeling of disadvantage, of not having enough to get along.

The effects of poverty on parenting are largely indirect. In this way, children are not independent in terms of economy and therefore any restrictions on their income and its consequences come from their parents. Like other parents, poor ones vary in age, marital status, mental health and support networks. Poverty, nonetheless, increases the likelihood that the total burden on parents will exceed their coping resources. Parents' vulnerabilities are intensified by poverty as well as exposing the child to adverse effects of neighbourhoods and poor housing (Halpern, 1988; Solnit, 1983).

Mistry and Biesanz (2008) analyzed the effects of socioeconomic status (SES) on preschool children's cognitive and behavioral outcomes and the impact of the quality of children's home environment and family nativity status on these relations. The authors concluded, that the results found in this study were consistent with the ecological perspective (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), indicating that socioeconomic status influences children's development indirectly through more proximal and mediating processes, such as the quality of children's home environments.

Conditions for the infant born in poverty often involve a negative triad of first, a vulnerable infant, second a vulnerable and overwhelmed parent, and finally in an unsupportive social and community context (Halpern 1993). As a result of the unpredictability of care and crises in the child's life, the child may fail to develop a secure base and fail to be socialized into an understanding of time, cause and effect, a sense of self-efficacy and identity that provide a foundation for later adjustment to school.

Poverty has a profound and detrimental influence on children and their families (Luthar, 1999). Likewise, poverty has been found to affect children particularly in the disruption of parenting. In this respect, Elder (1984) found that economic hardship negatively affected children through its disruption of parenting and other family processes. There was a direct relationship between financial loss and father's increasing irritability, depression, and explosive behavior, which in turn, was associated with

harsher and more arbitrary discipline practices. These parenting disruptions lead to increased behavioral and socio-emotional problems among the children in this study.

Bradley (2001) examined the impact of poverty on parenting and family functioning across ethnic groups; he found that poor mothers were less likely than non-poor mothers to communicate efficiently with their children, despite of ethnicity. In addition, they found that in all ethnic groups and at all age levels, poor parents were prone to use physical discipline and less likely to monitor their children than non-poor parents.

Definitions of Learning Disabilities

A review of the history reveals that LDs have been difficult to define, partly because they do not constitute a homogeneous disorder. Each type of LDs is characterized by distinct definitional and diagnostic issues, as well as issues associated with heterogeneity. Although learning disabilities are heterogeneous, they are best defined by markers involving academic skills (Fletcher et al., 2007). In general, learning disabled persons present an unexpected underachievement in one of the following areas: word recognition (reading), spelling and arithmetic.

A major assumption of the definition and classification problem of LDs is a lack of understanding of the criteria by which 'unexpected underachievement' can be distinguished from other learning problems. Fletcher et al. (2007) analyzed the evidence for the reliability and validity of four different models: Aptitude-achievement discrepancy, low achievement, intraindividual differences and Response to Instruction (RTI).

Following Fletcher et al. (2007) we will use a combination of Low Achievement and Response to Instruction Models (RTI) as a base of the classification of learning disabilities in the present research. The different models are explained below.

Aptitude- Achievement Discrepancy

Aptitude-Achievement discrepancies have been mostly used as a definitional criterion to determine LDs. The most common approach to shape aptitude-achievement discrepancy is the identification of a discrepancy between the results of an IQ test and a test of achievement. However, a lot of research has showed that this approach lacks the necessary validity to identify LDs.

Low Achievement Models

Low achievement models emerge as an alternative to aptitude-achievement discrepancy and their goal is to identify persons with LDs based on absolute low achievement (Siegel, 1992). One first problem analyzed in this model is that identification of LDs based exclusively on low achievement essentially equates LDs with low achievement. Because the intention of the LDs construct is to identify a unique group of low achievers whose underachievement is unexpected, it is questionable as to whether such an approach could ever identify individuals with LDs without additional criteria.

Intraindividual Differences Model

An intraindividual differences model proposes to assess cognitive strengths and weaknesses in order to identify unexpected underachievement. In this regard, LDs are associated with specific impairments in cognitive processes and there is variability in the cognitive strengths and weaknesses displayed by individuals with LDs. Consequently, these models operationalize unexpected underachievement as unevenness in development. The person with LDs is one with strengths in many areas but weaknesses in some core cognitive processes that lead to underachievement.

Response to Instruction (RTI)

The main difference with respect to the previous models lies on the mass screening. All the approaches reviewed so far are based on assessments administered at a single time point. Models incorporating RTI are dynamic and base identification on the assessment of ability change. By tying multiple assessments to specific attempts to intervene with a student, the construct of unexpected underachievement can be operationalized in part on the basis of an inadequate response to instruction that is effective with most individuals (Gresham, 2002).

An Overarching Framework

For the better understanding of the different sources of variability influencing outcomes in children with learning disabilities we are proposing the following framework (see Figure 1). For each LD, the primary manifestation of the disability represents specific academic skills deficits.

Another level of analysis addresses child characteristics, including core cognitive processes that determine the academic skill deficits as well as academic strengths. In our case, intelligence will play the role of a control variable and will not be used as a criterion for the identification of LD.

Academic achievement is also influenced by a second set of characteristics in the psychosocial domain such as the child motivation, behavioral problems, self-esteem. Dweck and Leggett (1988) demonstrated that students of equal ability displayed different behaviors during an academic activity; some of them persisting and achieving high levels of performance and others giving up. Dweck and her colleagues attributed those findings to motivation. Several studies have since documented the importance of motivation in the academic behavior and achievement of students with learning disabilities (LDs) (Bouffard & Couture, 2003; Fulk, Brigham, & Lohman, 1998; Pintrich, Anderman, &

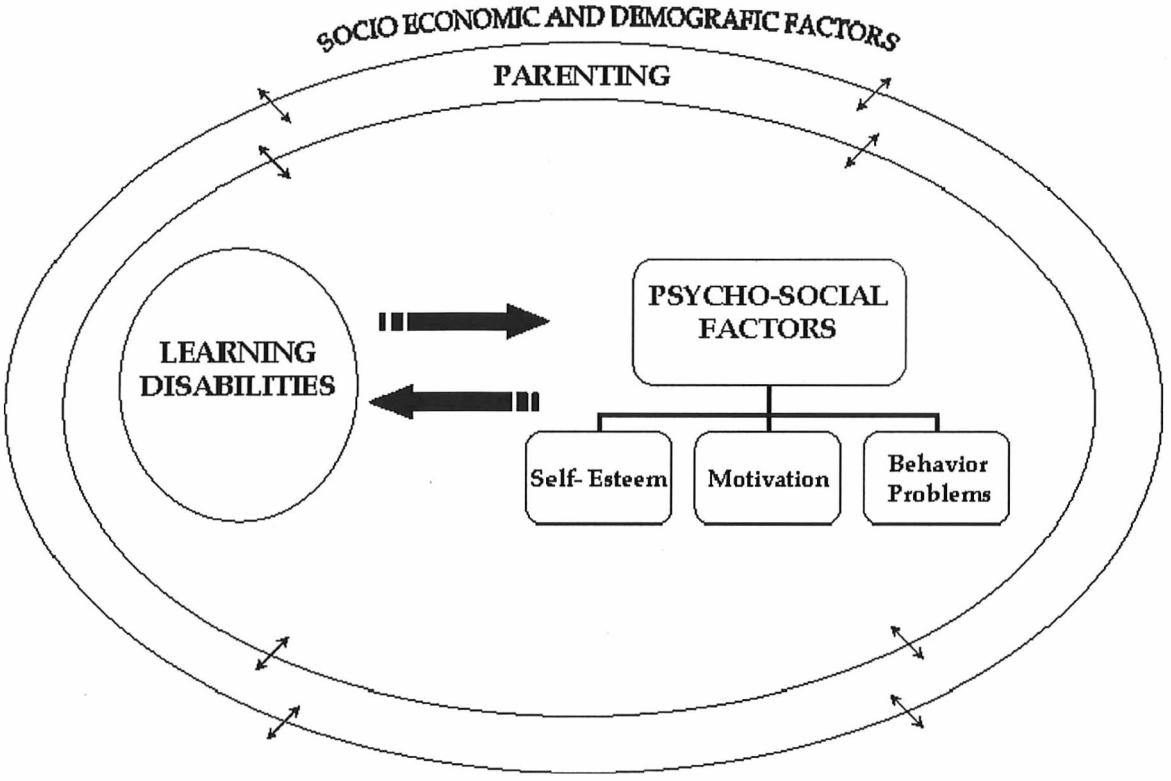
Klobucar, 1994; Thomas & Oldfather, 1997). In some of these studies, motivation acted as a moderator of achievement (Poskiparta, Niemi, Lepola, Ahtola, & Laine, 2003), or as a mediator (Sideridis, 2003), or both (Kaplan & Midgley, 2000).

Numerous studies have documented a distinct relationship between learning disabilities (LDs) and behavior problems in young children (Burstein, 2004), such as aggression (Duncan 1999), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Biederman ,2002), self-injury (Bamburg 1999), depression (Bruck, 1986), and anxiety (Greenham, 1999).

Since the majority of learning disabilities are comprised of disabilities in reading or verbal skills (Lyon, 1996), many of the studies which examine the relationship between general LDs and behavior are in fact investigating the likelihood of behavior problems among children with Verbal Learning Disabilities VLD (Hakeem, 2002). In addition, a number of studies have specifically targeted reading disabilities and measured its association with behavior. These studies revealed that VLD is associated with certain externalizing behavior problems such as ADHD (Holborow 1986) and to a lesser extent, aggression in early school-age children. Recently, Carroll (2005) supported this contention by finding that children with VLD were 3.8 times (95% CI: 2.37– 6.14) more likely to exhibit ADHD and 2.4 times (95% CI: 1.63–3.52) more likely to experience conduct problems compared to children with no VLD.

On the other hand, research within the field of self-esteem has demonstrated that individuals with learning disabilities (LDs) are prone to develop negative self-perceptions in comparison with their peers without learning disabilities (Bear, Minke, & Manning, 2002; Elbaum & Vaughn, 2003; Tabassam & Grainger, 2002). Of primary importance in this regard is the literature linking negative self-perceptions, or low self-esteem, to depressive tendencies (Harter, 1999) and behavioral or emotional disorders, such as conduct disorders, eating disorders, anxiety, and suicidal behavior (Coopersmith, 1967; Harter, 1999). Conversely, a favorable attitude toward oneself is related to positive psychological adjustment; high self-esteem, then, can be considered an important component of overall happiness and life satisfaction (Schweitzer, Seth-Smith, & Callan, 1992).

Figure 1. An Overarching Model



Given the extensive findings relating learning disabilities to the detrimental effects of low self-esteem (Bakker & Bosman, 2003; Gans, Kenny, & Ghany, 2003; Elbaum & Vaughn, 2003), it is essential that these topics be further explored.

The last and third level of analysis represents the influence of environmental factors; in which we are going to focus, includes the social and economic circumstances that attend the child.

We have seen the frameworks of parenting and learning disabilities with their subsequent impact on other domains such as behavior problems, self-esteem and motivation, but what is the interrelationship among all these variables that it is incumbent to both children and parents, in an impoverished reality?

General Objectives

- Investigate and explore the relationship between the context of parenting and learning problems in children from Lima.

Specifics Objectives

- Explore the relationship between parenting behaviors and academic achievement, behavior problems, motivation and self-esteem in children from impoverished zones in Lima.

Method

In the methodology section we will describe the procedure, participants, operational definitions of the variables under study, and the measurement instruments that will be used for this research.

Participants

Participants will be 11 to 12 year old children attending sixth grade at either regular schools or schools for children with learning disabilities.

In a first step, we will contact the head master of each school to recruit our sample; we aim to include 500 children in our study coming from urban region of Lima.

Participants will undergo a reading, writing and mathematics test. We will take the EVALUA-6 (Garcia Vidal & Gonzalez, 1999) – a standardized assessment battery to assess school achievement. Pupils who score below percentile 25 will be defined as children with learning problems. Such score could indicate reading, writing or math problems, but it could also indicate a combination of them.

On the basis of these tests we will be able to divide the research population in three groups: children with learning problems (<pc 25), an average group between pc 25 and

75 and an excellent group (>pc 75). Likewise, we will assess general intelligence by means of Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (Raven, 1963) – a test of observation skills and clear-thinking ability. This test was designed to measure a person's ability to form perceptual relations and to reason by analogy independent of language and formal schooling, offering insight about someone's capacity to observe, solve visual-spatial problems and learn.

The second part of the research will be focused on family variables, rather than child variables.

By registrating the educational level, profession and income of the parents, the socio-economical status of the family can be defined. Other demographic characteristics such as number of children and composition of the family help us to form a more complete image of the family. Besides these variables, we are especially interested in the parenting behavior of the parents.

Instruments

As the original instruments that will be used for this research are mostly in English, we will translate them from English to Spanish and then we will ask an expert in English (Spanish speaking) to do the back-translation from Spanish into English in order to control the quality of the translation.

- **Behavior Problems**

The Teacher Report Form (TRF) of the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 2001) is presented to the teacher of every child. The problem behavior part of the questionnaire consists of 120 items concerning behavioral and emotional problems, rated on a 3-point scale. In addition to a Total Problems score, two broadband syndrome scores (Internalizing, Externalizing) and eight narrowband syndrome scores (Withdrawn

Behavior, Somatic Complaints, Anxious/Depressed, Social Problems, Thought Problems, Attention Problems, Delinquent Behavior, and Aggressive Behavior) can be computed.

- **Parenting behavior**

The HOME Inventory (Caldwell, Bradley, 1984) is designed to assess the stimulation potential of a child's development. It is to be completed by an observer at the child's home when he/she is awake and interacting with his/her mother or primary caretaker.

The Early Adolescent (EA) HOME is designed for use with ages 10 to 15. It contains 60 items clustered into 7 subscales: Physical Environment, Learning Materials, Modeling, Instructional Activities, Regulatory Activities, Variety of Experience and Acceptance and Responsiveness.

The Ghent Parental Behavior Questionnaire (GPBS) is an instrument to assess parental behavior. The modified questionnaire by Van Leeuwen (2004) consists of 45 items, assigned to nine scales with at least five items per scale: Positive Parenting (making time for the child, showing interest; eleven items), Monitoring (supervision of the activities of the child; four items), Rules (teaching the child appropriate behavior; seven items), Discipline (punishment of the child when it misbehaves; six items), Inconsistent Discipline (punishment in an inconsistent way; three items), Harsh Punishment (corporal punishment and verbal blaming; four items), Ignoring (neglecting unwanted behavior; four items), Material Rewarding (rewarding good behavior of the child; three items), and Autonomy (stimulating autonomous behavior of the child; three items). Both instruments will be applied to both parents and their children.

- **Motivation**

To measure students' achievement goal orientations, we will use the *Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS - 1997 and 2000).*

The PALS is a self-report instrument with a Likert-type scale that goes from 1 (Not at all true) to 5 (Very true). The students' goal orientation refers to purposes or reasons to engage in academic achievement behaviors. It includes beliefs about purposes, competence, success, ability, effort, errors, and standards. Three types of students' goal orientations were assessed.

a) Learning goal orientation: measures the students' purpose of developing competence and skills, gaining knowledge and understanding. The focus is on the task itself (e.g., "In this class, it's important to me that I improve my skills this year").

b) Performance-approach goal orientation: assesses the students' purpose of comparing favorably to others, to demonstrate their competence and superiority, and to outperform others (e.g., "In this class, one of my goals is to show others that I'm good at my class work").

c) Performance–avoidance goal orientation: refers to the students' purpose of avoiding negative judgments about their competence and avoiding demonstration of incompetence. The focus is on the self (e.g., "One of my goals in class is to avoid looking like I have trouble doing the work").

- **Self-esteem**

In the Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1982) emphasis is placed on the assessment of a child's sense of competence across different domains, instead of viewing perceived competence as a unitary construct. Three domains of competence, each constituting a separate subscale, were identified (a) cognitive, (b) social, and (c) physical. A fourth subscale, general self-worth, independent of any particular skill domain, was included.

The psychometric properties of the scale are presented for third through ninth grades.

Data Analysis and Expectations

Analysis of the data will consist of diverse data analysis techniques, such as analysis of variance, regression analysis and multilevel modeling. In accordance with our theoretical framework, different variables will be combined in different waves of analysis.

In line with the literature we expect to find direct relationships with respect to learning disabilities and psycho- social factors. In this regard, it has been estimated that between 20% to 35% of individuals with learning disabilities display some type of maladaptive behaviors (Jacobson, 1982).

Likewise, we look forward to find a relationship between parenting behavior, learning disabilities and psychosocial factors (Barber, Chadwick, & Oerter, 1992; Bender, Allen, & Mc Elhaney, 2007; Wissink, Dekovic, & Meijer, 2006).

Finally, we expect to find a relationship between the socioeconomic and demographic factors that have a direct effect on parenting behavior and therefore this affects the child's learning problems and their psychosocial adaptation. Despite little research has focused on the environmental and psychological determinants in parenting; several researchers have documented the negative effect of financial strain and parenting stress on parenting behavior (Kotchick, 2002).

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