

The Conative and Vocative (Directive) Function in Parent-Child Interactions in Jordan

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ABSTRACT

The present study is carried out to investigate the conative and vocative pragmatic function of parent-child interactions in Irbid City, Jordan. A sample of 300 school children from different areas of Irbid was chosen randomly from Irbid governorate in North Jordan. The sample consisted of grade 5 pupils who are 11 years old. Fifty percent of the sample were males, whereas the second fifty percent females. A questionnaire of 5 items was distributed to the sample to measure the conative and vocative pragmatic function. The results showed that parent-child interactions in Jordan exhibit this pragmatic function. The results also showed that parents' interactions affect children's personality and behavior positively through applying certain tactics and styles.

INTRODUCTION

The pragmatic functions are listed and defined by Jakobson (1960: 353 – 357). Later on, many linguists such as Newmark (1988: 39 – 44) discussed the pragmatic functions. According to Jakobson and Newmark, the conative and vocative (directive) function, a major pragmatic function, is defined as a function in which the addresser imperatively urges the addressee to do or not to do something. Several components are related to this function: spoiling children, gender, consoling children, telling stories, and neglecting. In this function, language plays the role of convincing the addressee by motivating him to feel or to react. It is a morphosyntactic function that has the imperative syntactic form which cannot be faced by a question "Is it true or not?", but by a reaction to do or not to do:

E.g. "Keep quite". "Go away".

In the example above, the addresser is giving directives to the addressee asking for reaction to keep quite as in the first directive, or to go away as in the second directive. Alkhateeb and Wardat (2017) carry out a study that handles the informative and referential pragmatic function in parent-child interactions in Jordan. The results showed that parent-child interactions in the Jordanian family demonstrate the informative and referential pragmatic function.

Wardat and Alkhateeb (2016) deal with the emotive and expressive function of parent-child interactions in the Jordanian society. The findings indicated that parent-child interactions in the Jordanian society exhibit the emotive and expressive socio-pragmatic function. Antonovaa and Travinab (2014) carry out a study on questions of the difference between school and scientific approach to the problems of the modern Russian language: the relationship between the linguistic course and literature; the communicative activity approach as a possibility to avoid traditional methodic and to implement algorithms of linguistic research for studying the native language; the paradigm transfer of teaching from knowledge-oriented to activity-oriented, as shown by the example presenting the secondary school learning.

Bayroti and Hamdi (2012) investigate the effectiveness of training mothers in using different reinforcement strategies to reduce the noncompliance of children and to improve self-efficacy of mothers. The sample of the study was composed of (51) mothers and their (51) children, who were 5-10 years old. The mothers were divided into three groups, two experimental groups and one control group; each group consisted of (17) mothers and their (17) children. The first experimental group was trained on

the use of differential reinforcement; the second was trained on reframing, while the control group was left untrained. Two instruments were developed and used to measure children's noncompliance, and a third instrument was used to measure mothers' general self-efficacy. Results pointed out no significant differences between the two experimental groups.

Abu-Jaber et al. (2008) carry out a study which aims at reading the quality and level of perception, awareness and information of child neglect and physical and sexual abuse. The study dealt with Jordanian parents of the age of 25-65 years who live in Amman. The results showed that the sample was aware of the size and effects of the problems of child neglect, and physical and sexual child abuse, but the sample indicated that parents were not aware of the community services available for them to solve the physical and sexual child's abuse. An example of sexual abuse incident was presented to the respondents; parents did not know how to behave with the abuser.

The findings of the study guided the researchers to recommend an urgent need to focus community attention on the problem of neglect and abuse of children, and to raise awareness of the community resources available in Jordan to come up with a solution to this problem. Laible (2004) shows the importance of the daily discourse between mothers and their children. The study investigates the effect of the daily parents' discourse on their children, and how they shape their thoughts in order to be active in their society. The study also examines the attachment security, which means the parents' taking care of their child's needs and linguistic sensitivity. The data analysis showed that the effect of the parents on their children's world does not come only from the content of their discourse, but also from the time spent in the daily discourse which takes place between parents and their children. The sample consisted of fifty-one preschool children and their mothers who were videotaped reading a story and discussing the child's previous behavior. The findings revealed that both aspects of mother-child discourse, the style and content of discourse were related to attachment, temperament, and the child's development in the society.

The study relied on Vygotsky's (1978: 79-91) work. According to Vygotsky, language does not only provide the child with a new social context to take part in, but it also provides the means for organizing and shaping his thought. Laible finds that through parents' discourse, a child learns social, emotional, and moral experiences. She also gives good

information about the effects of the daily discourse on the social mentality and personality of the child; caregivers teach their children what types of behavior are or are not accepted by the society. The current research will be concerned with pragmatic issues in addition to social ones.

Stein (2002) is concerned with father-adolescent communication. The study tries to examine the son's and father's perceptions of communication in addition to their perceptions of adolescent consumer activities. The research finds out that family structure, level of income, and number of children had no relationship to son adolescent consumer activities. On the other hand, these elements had little relation to the mean differences between the father's and son's perceptions of adolescent consumer activities.

Abu Rabia (2000) tries to analyze the difficulties of learning Standard Arabic in elementary schools which are usually attributed to the use of both dialects and Standard Arabic. He argues that the colloquial linguistic form is totally different from Standard Arabic that is used as a formal language in the classroom. Caregivers, teachers, and parents believe that the use of the dialect before entering the school not only affects learning Standard Arabic which is used in classes, but also affects children's behavior and needs a long time to reduce this effect. The study examines how the exposure to literary Arabic of preschool children affects their reading comprehension of literary Arabic stories in the first two grades. The sample of the study consisted of 282 children who were presented to reading comprehension at the end of grades 1 and 2. The results showed better findings in reading comprehension for the children who were using Standard Arabic than those for the children who were using only spoken Arabic.

The researcher argued that colloquial Arabic affects children's standard language. That is why parents and teachers should play a great role in getting rid of the colloquial Arabic at schools. Considering the literature review, the researchers concluded that there are many studies on parent-child language acquisition which affects children's behavior and personality at school age (e.g. Alkhateeb and Wardat 2017; Wardat and Alkhateeb 2016; Antonovaa and Travinab 2014; Bairouti and Hamdy 2012; Abu Jaber 2008; Laible 2004; Stein 2002; and Abu Rabia 2000). It is clear that no study has so far shed light on parent-child interactions in Jordan. While most of the previous studies deal with children's behavior at school, the current study is concerned with the home effects on pupils' behavior and personality.

Finally, there is no study that handles the conative and vocative (directive) pragmatic function of parent-child interactions from children's point of view. Thus, there is a need to investigate parent-child interactions in the Jordanian family. The current study will cover this subject and fill a gap in the related literature. The last intent of the present study is, therefore, to examine the conative and vocative (directive) pragmatic function of the parent-child interactions and to determine the degree of the effects of parents on children's behavior from pupils' point of view. The study will, thus, try to answer the following question:

- How does parents' discourse affect the behavior and personality of their children?

METHODS

Population

The population is all fifth graders in Irbid schools, Jordan. The population of Irbid governorate is about 1,137,100 Jordanian citizens. Males are about 582,400, whereas females are about 554,700 as estimated by the Department of Statistics (2012). The whole population speaks the rural variety of Jordanian Arabic (JA).

Sample

A sample of 300 children from different areas of Irbid was chosen randomly from primary schools in Irbid governorate in North Jordan. It consisted of pupils at grade five who were 11 years old. Half of them were males, whereas the second half were females. The sample covered children who were met only at schools.

Data Collection

In this study, face-to-face visits were made to the children at Irbid governorate schools before the end of the second school semester 2016/2017. During the school classes, a five-item questionnaire (see Appendices 1 and 2) was distributed to the subjects who were met for the first time. One researcher explained the purpose of the study and the questionnaire. After the subjects' agreement, they were given 10 minutes to answer all the questionnaire items by marking a tick in the right square in the first part and writing their viewpoints of their fathers' and mothers' characteristics in the second part. The questionnaire concentrated on the relationship between parents and their children, and the effects of this relationship on the discourse and behavior of the children at home and in their society. The questionnaire was divided into two parts:

(1) The first part was intended to provide the researchers with information about the nature of the relationship between parents and their children and how this relationship affects children's behavior at home and in the outside world.

(2) The second part was supposed to give the researchers indications of the good and bad conducts or qualities which children find in their parents, but the respondents did not answer this part. Thus, it is disregarded in data analysis.

The questionnaire had two parallel forms; one was special for the relationship between a child and his mother and the other for the relationship between the child and his father. Both forms were given to male and female children. The form of the questionnaire in the current study followed the questionnaire used by Titze et al. (2014, pp. 917-933). Their questionnaire was adapted to serve the purpose of the current study. Since the subjects of the sample are Arab children whose English proficiency is not that much satisfactory, the questions were translated into Arabic and then they were distributed to them.

Finally, the study deals with normal children, so it excludes other children who have medical problems such as aphasics, deafness, or blindness. Also, the paper is limited to eleven-year-old children, so it does not deal with adults or infants.

Reliability

Since children are the subjects of the study who are affected by parents' discourse, a test-retest is the method followed to establish the reliability of the tool of this study. The test group consisted of a small sample (20 pupils) randomly selected from the population and excluded from the main sample. Then, the questionnaire was given to the main group during the first week of May 2017. To show the effects of parents on their children, a statistical analysis was carried out for the collected data. As a sequence, the same questionnaire was given to the same group under the same conditions during the last week of May 2017.

The results of the test show that Cronbach's Alpha for the Father's sample is 0.884 and for the Mother's sample it is 0.845. The previous results are considered to be of high value and a piece of evidence of consistency in the five items that were used to measure the father/mother-son/daughter relations. See Table (1).

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Test

Reliability statistics		
Sample	Cronbach's alpha	No. of items
Fathers sample	0.884	5
Mothers sample	0.845	5

Content-validity

The content of the questionnaire was given to a jury of three linguists from the English Department at Yarmouk University in Jordan. They were kindly requested to judge the content of the questionnaire, stating whether the research instrument is valid. The jury stated that the questionnaire (see Appendices 1 and 2) is valid in the sense that it can measure what it is supposed to measure.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed to determine the effects of the conative and vocative socio-pragmatic function of the parent-child interactions. An interpretation of such interactions stated in each question was carried out according to what it functioned in the parent-child relationship. The related literature showed the styles of discourse used by parents in their relationship with their children; ignoring children, reinforcing children, and motivating children are styles that can lead to the conative and vocative pragmatic function which is the scope of data analysis.

The questionnaire had five items given to the school children whose responses were computed as follows: Never was given 1 point, Rarely 2 points, Sometimes 3 points, Often 4 points, and Always 5 points. Then, averages, percentages, and standard deviation were also computed.

In the discussion, tables summarize respondents' answers including the answers of five choices "never", "rarely", "sometimes", "often", and "always". The researchers grouped answers into three groups; while the negative group includes the average of the answers "never" and "rarely", the positive group includes the average of the answers "often" and "always". The third group consisted of the "sometimes" respondents.

After collecting data, the researchers analyzed them qualitatively and quantitatively according to the following equations:

(1) $\bar{x} \leq 2.5$ = negative response;

(2) $\bar{x} > 2.5$ and < 3.5 = sometimes response;

(3) $\bar{x} \geq 3.5$ = positive response.

Moreover, the T-test was carried out to show whether there are statistically significant differences between the father's questionnaire and the mother's for each question.

Finally, the second part of the questionnaire was, as mentioned earlier, excluded from the analysis since the respondents did not answer it.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study stems from exploring the conative and vocative (directive) pragmatic function of the parent-child discourse in the Jordanian society. Moreover, the study will give information regarding the pragmatic interactions that might show the level of congruence of the relationship between the Jordanian family. Through discourse situations such as consoling children, telling stories, and other interactions, the study will shed light on the content and style of discourse from a pragmatic point of view. The study also focuses on the family discourse as a starting point which will affect children's behavior and personality in the whole society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers try to investigate whether parents' styles of treating their children at home affect children's behavior, on the one hand, and the extent to which these styles affect their behavior and personality, on the other hand. For the sake of this investigation, questions are devised to measure whether children get what they want from their parents, gender effects, consoling effects, telling stories, and neglecting effects.

The Effect of Spoiling Children

Overprotecting children and giving the impression that parents are responsible for everything may decrease the children's ability of taking things seriously, and will make children dependent in facing any situation in the future, a matter which will affect

children's personality negatively in their decision-making, in their independency, and in self-confidence.

The effect of spoiling children has been tested in the questionnaire. Table (2) shows that the majority of parents do what their children want.

Table 2: The Effect of Spoiling Children

Q1 My Father/Mother does what I want.	Sample				t-test for Equality of Means		
	Father's sample		Mother's sample		t	d.f	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage			
Never	9	6.0%	0	0.0%	-1.879	98	.063
Rarely	6	4.0%	21	14.0%			
Sometimes	45	30.0%	51	34.0%			
Often	39	26.0%	42	28.0%			
Always	51	34.0%	36	24.0%			
Total	150	100.0%	150	100.0%			
Mean	3.78		Mean	3.62			

When asked if his or her mother does what he or she wants, 14% said "never" and "rarely", whereas 86% said "sometimes", "often", and "always". When asked the same question about his or her father, 10% said he "never" and "rarely" did what he or she wanted, but 90% said "sometimes", "often", and "always". The T-test shows that there is no statistically significant difference at $\alpha = 0.05$ level ($p > 0.05$) between respondents' answers of Fathers' and Mothers' questionnaires.

Overprotective parents will make the child feel that he is at risk when he faces any new event which would weaken his self-confidence. Furthermore, parents with high levels of anxiety and sensitivity try to solve every problem by themselves without letting their children get the chance of making any judgment or taking decision. Doing what the child wants will harm the children's personality. Parents may not feel that they are spoiling their children during childhood; they will discover that later when these children get older and held responsible for their opinion and decision. All of what is mentioned before reduces

children's self-confidence and enhances children's selfishness (Erozkán 2012: 53).

Disobedient children are known as spoiled children. Bairoti and Hamdi (2012: 294) are concerned with the mothers' strategies which can solve the problem of children's noncompliance. Bairoti and Hamdi's findings indicated that no strategy can solve this problem except training the mothers. This study also shows that spoiling children is widely spread in Jordan, a problem that needs to be solved. These results give an impression that parents in the Jordanian family spoil their children by doing what their children want. Spoiling children might be attributed to the parents' kindness which controls their behavior with their children.

The Effect of Gender

The sample was asked about the effect of gender in the Jordanian family. Table (3) shows the respondents' answers.

Table 3: The Effect of Gender

Q2 My Father/Mother prefers his sons more than his daughters	Sample				t-test for Equality of Means		
	Father's sample		Mother's sample		t	d.f	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage			
Never	105	70.0%	111	74.0%	.287	98	.775
Rarely	6	4.0%	15	10.0%			
Sometimes	12	8.0%	3	2.0%			
Often	12	8.0%	3	2.0%			
Always	15	10.0%	18	12.0%			
Total	150	100.0%	150	100.0%			
Mean	1.84		Mean	1.68			

Data analysis revealed that the majority of Jordanian parents do not prefer sons to daughters. When asked if his or her mother prefers sons to daughters, the majority of children (74%) said "never" and "rarely", and almost the same results were provided by the father's sample (70%). The T-test shows that there is no statistically significant difference at $\alpha = .05$ level ($p > .05$) between respondents' answers of Fathers' and Mothers' questionnaires. The previous results give an impression that daughters do not have a gender-problem in the Jordanian family.

Stein's (2002) study shows that there is no relationship between the level of income and family structure, on the one hand, and the relationship between fathers and their sons, on the other. The current study adds to Stein's study another result; the gender of children has nothing to do with parent-

child relationship in the Jordanian family. The positive result of this study might be attributed to parents' awareness of bad effects of discrimination, parents' self-esteem, and parents' feel of justice.

The Effect of Consoling Children

Ying et al.(2015: 2-3) define parental consoling or monitoring as a group of procedures that parents do to control their children's behavior. The procedures start with collecting information about children's activities, whereabouts, and friendships. The next step is to communicate with children. Through communication, parents can reinforce good behaviors like the virtues of sincerity, loyalty, obedience, etc., and help the children to get rid of bad ones like lying, smoking, stealing, and the like.

Table 4: The Effect of Consoling Children

Q3 My Father/Mother consoles me all the time.	Sample				t-test for Equality of Means		
	Father's sample		Mother's sample		t	d.f	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage			
Never	57	38.0%	42	28.0%	-.480	98	.632
Rarely	30	20.0%	33	22.0%			
Sometimes	42	28.0%	42	28.0%			
Often	18	12.0%	15	10.0%			
Always	3	2.0%	18	12.0%			
Total	150	100.0%	150	100.0%			
Mean		2.20	Mean	2.56			

The results of this research show that the sample is almost divided into equal percentages in answering question number 3. Thus, parents are considered to have a low level of consoling their children. When asked if his or her mother consoles him or her, 50% of children said "never" and "rarely", and 50% said "sometimes", "often", and "always". For the father, the percentage was 58% who said "never" and "rarely". However, 42% of respondents answered "sometimes", "often", and "always". The T-test shows that there is no statistically significant difference at $\alpha = .05$ level ($p > .05$) between respondents' answers of Fathers' and Mothers' questionnaires. These neutral results lead to the fact that parents need to be more effective in consoling their children. Consolation is not a matter of spying; it is a way of controlling children and helping them to grow up properly.

Communication is a style of monitoring children; through discussion, children discover right and wrong behaviors. When parents do not try to support their children's responses or humiliate their children's feelings, children may develop a negative personality. Unsupportive parental reactions can be punishment (i.e., punishing children to prevent them from sharing their negative emotions), humiliation (i.e., giving the children an impression that their feelings are not important), or negative reactions (i.e., when parents show children that they are upset from children's emotions) (Gentzler et al. 2005: 593).

Laible's (2004) study points out that style and content of the daily discourse between a mother and her children affected her children's personality in the society. Laible's results have to be considered by parents in the Jordanian family to get benefit of the

importance of the daily discourse between parents and their children. The results of this investigation show that parents do not give enough thought and importance to the consolation of their children, a matter which will affect their children's personality.

The Effect of Telling Stories

The sample was asked whether parents tell children stories before they go to bed. The results are stated in the following table.

Table 5: The Effect Telling Stories

Q4 My Father/Mother tells me stories before I sleep.	Sample				t-test for Equality of Means		
	Father's sample		Mother's sample		t	d.f	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage			
Never	123	82.0%	111	74.0%	-1.711	98	.090
Rarely	15	10.0%	21	14.0%			
Sometimes	6	4.0%	6	4.0%			
Often	6	4.0%	12	8.0%			
Total	150	100.0%	150	100.0%			
Mean	1.30		Mean	1.46			

Jordanian parents do not take care of telling their children stories. When asked if his or her parents tell stories before bedtime, the majority of children said no for both mother (74%) and father (82%). The T-test shows that there is no statistically significant difference at $\alpha = 0.05$ level ($p > 0.05$) between respondents' answers of Fathers' and Mothers' questionnaires.

Telling stories might be important to develop both children's language and personality. Language is developed through listening, speaking, reading loudly and learning new words, and personality is upgraded through the wisdom and virtues that these stories express. The results of this study give a negative

impression that parents in the Jordanian family do not give any importance or attention to telling their children stories. The significant difference between the mother questionnaire and the father questionnaire that the mother is more willing to tell stories to her children might be related to the close relationship between mothers and their children.

The Effect of Neglecting

This question was asked to see whether the respondents' answers to the previous questions about spoiling children, gender, consoling, and telling stories are reliable or not concerning the conative and vocative (directive) function. The results are shown in table (5).

Table 5: The Effect Neglecting

Q5 My Father/Mother neglects me.	Sample				t-test for Equality of Means		
	Father's sample		Mother's sample		t	d.f	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage			
Never	141	94.0%	141	94.0%	-1.410	98	.162
Rarely	0	0.0%	3	2.0%			
Sometimes	6	4.0%	0	0.0%			
Often	3	2.0%	3	2.0%			
Always	0	0.0%	3	2.0%			
Total	150	100.0%	150	100.0%			
Mean	1.14		Mean	1.16			

Positive results regarding the behavior of neglecting children are shown in the investigation. When asked if his or her father was neglectful, (94%) of children said that his or her father was not neglectful, and (96%) of them said that his or her mother was not neglectful, either. The T-test shows that there is no statistically significant difference at $\alpha = .05$ level

($p > .05$) between respondents' answers of Fathers' and Mothers' questionnaires.

Parents have a great role in children's personalities. When parents neglect their children, many important traits of children's personalities are defected or broken down: expressing themselves, decision

making, and self-confidence (Spencer and Baldwin 2005: 26).

Abu-Jaber et al.'s (2008) study finds that parents in the Jordanian family are aware of child neglect. The results of the current study also indicate that parents in Jordan are cooperative with their children, so they do not neglect their children. This has to do with the right style of communication in both language (word-choice and raising inferential and open-ended questions (e.g., wh-questions))and physical behaviors (e.g., hugging, kissing and sharing children their entertainment time). Parents, according to the sample, are aware of the psychological negative

effects of neglecting their children, so they try to avoid this bad behavior.

Summary

The T-test shows that there is no significant difference at $\alpha = .05$ level ($p > .05$) between fathers and mothers concerning the function under consideration. The mean of the two father and mother samples shows that the conative and vocative function is available and observed in the Jordanian society. The mean of the two samples (father sample = 1.9840 and mother sample = 2.1640) means that the function is there. See table (6).

Table 6: The Conative and Vocative (Directive) Function. The T-Test.

The Conative or Vocative (Directive) Function		Mean	Std. Deviation	T	d.f	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Father	1.9840	1.34125	-	498	.152
	Mother	2.1640	1.46207	1.434		

The conative and vocative (directive) function is not a matter of just giving orders. These orders come through different styles parents have to use with their children. Parents should be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of the styles they use. It is important for parents to know when, how, and why they should or should not practice a certain behavior with their children. In the Jordanian family, the five effects of the conative and vocative function (spoiling children, gender, consoling, telling stories, and neglecting)were divided into three parts. Firstly, two of the above mentioned effects preferring sons more than daughters and neglecting children are not a big problem, which means that parents are aware of the positive and negative effects of these behaviors, so they avoid them. Secondly, two other effects, spoiling children (negative effect) and telling stories, are a serious problem because they are neglected by parents. Thirdly, the Jordanian parents exhibit a low level of consoling their children. Parents' not giving due account to these effects will negatively affect and create troubles to children's personality.

CONCLUSION

The conative and vocative (directive) function indicates how children react to their parents' styles within the family. The effects mentioned above serve to show how parents affect their children through this function. It is found that gender does not affect the relationship between parents and their children. Parents also do not neglect their children. But parents do not tell their children stories; they spoil their children and do not control or console them, so they

negatively affect their behavior. This research shows that the effects or questions are important to develop the personality, behavior, and communication of children within the family (negatively and positively) and will affect children's communication in the society as well.

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Appendix 1: Mother Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

The purpose of the study is to examine the conative and vocative pragmatic function of the parent-child interactions. The questionnaire asks about the effects of the mother on her children. Please do not write your names; your responses will be used only for the purpose of this study. They will be top secret, and will never be used but just for this study.

Male Female Number of Children in the Family: Date:

Part -1-:

- 1. My mother does what I want.
- 2. My mother prefers her sons more than her daughters.
- 3. My Mother consoles me all the time.
- 4. My Mother tells me stories before I go to bed.
- 5. My Mother neglects me.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Part -2-:

- 1. What I like about my mother:
- 2. What I do not like about my mother:

Appendix 2: Father Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

The purpose of the study is to examine the conative and vocative pragmatic function of the parent-child interactions. The questionnaire asks about the effects of the father on his children. Please do not write your names; your responses will be used only for the purpose of this study. They will be top secret, and will never be used but just for this study.

Male Female Number of Children in the Family: Date:

Part-1-:

- 1. My father does what I want.
- 2. My father prefers his sons more than his daughters.
- 3. My father consoles me all the time.
- 4. My father tells me stories before I go to bed.
- 5. My father neglects me.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Part-2-:

- 1. What I like about my father:.....
- 2. What I do not like about my father:.....