Social competence and emotional regulation in preschool children as a function of maternal acceptance and rejection

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Suggested Citation: Bayındır, D., Güven, G., Sezer, T., Akşin, E. & Yılmaz, E. (2021). Social competence and emotional regulation in preschool children as a function of maternal acceptance and rejection. International Journal of Innovative Research in Education, 8(2), 36-46. https://doi.org/10.18844/ijire.v4i1.2311

Received from March 10, 2021; revised from October 15, 2021; accepted from December 10, 2021
Selection and peer review under responsibility of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zehra Ozcinar Atatürk Teacher Training College, Lefkosa, Cyprus
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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyze the relationship between maternal acceptance-rejection levels and preschool children's social competence and emotional regulation skills. Sample of the research, which was designed according to relational scanning model, consisted of 303 mother-child pairs who were attending a pre-school educational institution during 2014-15 academic years, in Istanbul, selected by random sampling. The tools used for data collection were "Personal Information Form", "Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire-Mother Form (PARQ)", "Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation-30 (SCBE-30)" and "Emotion Regulation Checklist". Maternal acceptance-rejection levels were evaluated by themselves, whereas children's social competence and emotional regulation skills were evaluated by their teachers. The obtained data were analyzed by Pearson correlation test and t-test, using appropriate statistical software. As a result of the study, it has been found that there is a positive and significant relationship between a mother's acceptance level and children's "Social Competence" subscale of SCBE-30 and their emotional regulation skills.

Keywords: Maternal acceptance-rejection, social competence, emotional regulation.

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1. Introduction

Parenting behaviors and the child's social development (Bohlin, Hagekull & Anderson, 2005; Ladd, 1999; Tepeli & Yilmaz, 2013), understanding emotions, and managing skills (Altan, 2006; Metin, 2010; Kliewer, Fearnover & Miller, 1996; Hardy, Power & Jaedicke, 1993; Tepeli, Yilmaz & Kuyucu, 2014) are associated. Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory provides one of the most widely used theoretical frameworks in the study of parental behavior. According to the Parental Acceptance Rejection Theory, people need to receive a positive reaction from individuals who are important to them. According to this theory, the most basic need of children is the care, comfort, support, and love that their parents will provide. This need exists in all of humanity regardless of other restrictive conditions such as culture, race, physical characteristics, social status, language, geography (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002). Studies conducted in the 1990s have shown the effects of parental temperature on the psychological, social, and educational development of children. In Turkey, the research also found that children with parental acceptance, were associated with high social development (Kasuto, 2005; Gulay, 2011), highly regarded by peers (Gulay-ogelma & the fly-hurry, 2013), high social problem-solving skills (Tepeli & Yilmaz, 2013), and high emotion comprehension skills (Tepeli & others, 2014).

The goal that children are expected to achieve socially in the preschool period is for children to gain social competence. Cavell, Meehan, and Fiala (2003) define social competence as a structure that includes social adaptation, social performance, and social skills (As cited by Arslan-Yalcin, 2009). Social skills are expected to increase as the child’s age progresses. In studies conducted with children in preschool age in Turkey, it is also observed that social skills increase with age (Corapçi, Aksan, Arslan-Yalçın & Vaughmurlu, 2010). In addition to the age variable, the results of the research on the gender variable show that girls' social competence levels are higher than boys' and they show more prosocial behavior than boys (Diener & Kim, 2004; LaFreniere et al., 2002). In studies conducted with a Turkish sample, it is also observed that girls are more socially competent compared to boys, and they exhibit angry and angry behaviors less frequently (Çorapçi et al., 2010; Arslan-Yalçın, 2009). One of the important variables in the development of social behavior is family attitudes and behaviors. Children with mom-sensitivity, consistency in behavior, and socially competent behaviors talk about their feelings in positive and negative parental behaviors associated with strictness (Ladd, 1999).

1.1. Related research

Many studies are showing a strong link between social skills and emotional skills (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000; Ashiabi, 2000). Eisenberg, Pidada, and Liew (2001) found that higher emotion regulation skills were associated with higher social competence and fewer behavioral problems. Emotion regulation skill includes changing emotional reactions to adapt to the conditions of the environment (Thompson, 1994 cited in Çorapçi et al., 2010). The deficiencies in emotion regulation skills are externalization and internalization problems (Eisenberg et al. 2001; Eisenberg et al., 2004; Rydell et al., 2003), inability to act empathetically, and low prosocial behavior (Rydell, Berlin & Bohlin, 2003).

Studies conducted in the field of development emphasize that emotion regulation exists even in the first years of life (Kopp, 1989) and develops in family-child interaction (Fox & Calkins, 2003). According to Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, and Robinson (2007), children develop their skills by observing and modeling the emotion regulation behaviors shown by their parents. Children who are securely connected using more effective emotion regulation skills (Kliewer et al., 1996), Children whose mothers show higher acceptance and approval can use very different strategies to deal with emotional distress (Hardy et al., 1993). Similarly, studies conducted with a Turkish sample have shown that maternal attention predicts children's emotion regulation skills (Altan 2006; Metin, 2010). The literature shows that girls have higher emotion regulation skills than boys (Cole, Zahn-Waxler & Smith, 1994). It is believed that these results may have arisen about social gender roles (Dion & Yee, 1986; Cole et al., 1994). This also indicates cultural differences in emotion regulation skills. While it is not considered appropriate to explain negative emotions in communistic cultures, it is valued in individualistic cultures Matsumoto, Hee Yoo & Chung, 2007; Text 2010). In support of this view, a study
conducted by Zahn-Waxler, Friedman, Cole, Mizute, and Hiruma (1996) found that American preschoolers show more anger and less emotion regulation in conflict and distress situations than Japanese children.

1.2. Purpose of study

The relevant literature presented above shows that research has been conducted on parental acceptance-rejection, social competence, and emotion regulation skills, but studies examining all three of these variables with the same sample groups are rare. The research, which examines the relationship between mothers' acceptance-rejection levels and children's social competence and emotion regulation skills, was designed in a relational screening model.

2. Method

2.1. Working Group

The study group of the study consists of 303 children attending pre-school educational institutions, selected by the cluster sampling method on the Anatolian side of Istanbul in the spring semester of 2014-2015, and mothers who volunteered to participate in the study. 52.6% of the children in the study group were girls and 47.4% were boys; 37.6% of the children were in the age group of 5 years and 62.4% were in the age group of 6 years. 1.3% of the mothers participating in the study were between the ages of 18 and 25, 40.4% were between the ages of 26 and 33, 50.7% were from 34 to 41, and 7.6% were over the age of 42. 5.2% of mothers graduated from primary school, 6.9% from secondary school, 30.3% from high school, 13.8% from associate degree, 36.6% from an undergraduate degree, and 7.2% from graduate school. 44% of mothers have one child, 48.7% have two children, and 7.3% have three or more children.

2.2. Data Collection instruments

The data collection tool that is used as a "personal information form" and "family child relationship Scale-Mother Form" by mothers of children in the Working Group "Social competence and behavior evaluation Scale-30" and "Editing Emotion Scale" of the children were evaluated by the teachers.

In the scope of the research, Personal Information Form, Family Child Relationship Scale - Mother Form, Social Competence and Behavior Assessment Scale-30, Emotion Regulation Scale were used as data collection tools. Personal Information Form: With the form developed by the researchers, demographic information (age, gender, mother's education level, income, etc.) of the mothers and children in the study group of the research was obtained. Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (Mother Form): The Family Child Relationship Scale-Mother Form was developed by Rohner, Saavedra, and Granum in 1980 and adapted into Turkish by Anjel and Erkman in 1993. The scale consisted of the acceptance and rejection behavior of the mother and her child, the mother's perception on the way of measuring a child over 3 years of age, 56 substance and warmth/affection (Article 20), hostility/aggression (Article 16), indifference/neglect (Article 12), and undifferentiated rejection (8 items) that consists of four subtests, including Likert-type scale. Scores from subtests and a high total score indicate a high level of rejection. The higher the rejection level, the higher the rejection of the child by the mother and the lower the acceptance of the child (Öner, 2012).

The Social Competence and Behavior Assessment Scale-30 was developed by LaFreniere and Dumas (1996) and the Turkish adaptation was made by Çorapçı et al. (2010). It is a scale consisting of 30 items that evaluate the quantitative characteristics of problem symptoms and social skills of preschool children and has three subscales: "Social Competence", "Anger-Aggression", and "Anxiety-Withdrawal". The "Social Competence" subscale measures positive characteristics such as the cooperation children show when they are together with their peers and the search for decisions. "Anger-Aggression" sub-scale, measures how children defy peer relationships, are incompatible, act aggressively, and they are the externalization symptoms of the problem. The anxiety-introversion sub-scale of the children are sad, depressed mood, and it assesses internalizing symptoms, such as inhibition problems in their group show. The scale is 6-point Likert and can be filled in by the teacher.
or parent.

Emotion Regulation Scale was developed by Shields and Cicchetti (1997) and its Turkish adaptation was made by Batum and Yaşmurlu (2007). The scale consists of 24 items evaluating the emotional reactivity of preschool and school-age children and the regulation and expression of emotions according to the conditions of the environment and two sub-dimensions: "Emotion Regulation" and "Lability-Negativity". It is of the 4th Likert type and can be filled in by the teacher or the parent.

2.3. Data analysis

In the analysis of the data, the appropriate statistical package program was used and Pearson Correlation analysis and t-test analyses were performed to evaluate the data. The level of significance was p<.05. It has been accepted as 05.

3. Results

In this section, which contains the findings obtained as a result of the research, the results of the t-test, in which the social competence and emotion regulation skills of children and the acceptance levels of mothers were examined according to the age variables, are presented in Table 1 for the first time.

Table 1

| T-Test of Mothers’ Acceptance-Rejection Levels and Children’s Social Competence and Emotion Regulation Skills According to Gender Variables |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subscales | Gender | n | X | Ss | Sd | t | p |
| Temperature and Love | Girl | 159 | 25,35 | 3,797 | 300 | -2,187 | .029* |
| Aggression and Hatred | Man | 144 | 26,48 | 5,141 | | | |
| Indifference and Neglect | Girl | 159 | 22,23 | 5,004 | 300 | .244 | .807 |
| Man | 144 | 22,09 | 5,527 | | | |
| Not Parsed | Girl | 159 | 14,69 | 2,808 | 300 | -1,447 | .149 |
| Rejection | Man | 144 | 15,20 | 3,326 | | | |
| Family Children | Girl | 159 | 22,23 | 5,004 | 300 | .244 | .807 |
| Man | 144 | 22,09 | 5,527 | | | |
| Total Score of the Relationship Scale | Girl | 159 | 14,69 | 2,808 | 300 | -1,447 | .149 |
| Man | 144 | 15,20 | 3,326 | | | |
| Social Competence and Behaviour Evaluation Scale-30 | Man | 159 | 48,14 | 8,880 | 300 | 2,926 | .004** |
| Social Competence | Girl | 159 | 44,99 | 9,837 | | | |
| Aggression | Man | 144 | 17,83 | 7,582 | 300 | -2,429 | .016* |
| Anxiety | Girl | 159 | 20,35 | 10,399 | | | |
| Introversion | Man | 144 | 19,84 | 8,794 | 300 | 1,106 | .269 |
| Emotion Editing Scale | Man | 144 | 18,79 | 7,723 | | | |
| Emotion Edit | Kız | 159 | 25,20 | 4,076 | 300 | .735 | .463 |
| Variable Negative | Erkek | 144 | 24,85 | 4,148 | | | |
| Negative | Erkek | 144 | 24,69 | 6,630 | 300 | -3,258 | .001** |

*p<.05; **p<.01

Table 1, according to family child relationship scale total score of the mothers surveyed, "aggression and hatred", "Indifference and neglect" and "Unsorted Refuse," sub-dimension according to the gender of their children an average of total points were found that showed significant differences (P>.05). It was found that there was a significant difference in favor of girls in the "Warmth and Love" subdimension of the Family Child Relationship Scale (p<.05).

The Social Competence and Behavior Assessment Scale of the children in the study group of the study was called "Social Competence" (p<.01) and "Resentment-Aggression" (p<.05) it was found that the subscales showed a significant difference according to gender, while the "Anxiety-Introversion" subscale did not show a significant difference according to gender (p>.05). Accordingly, the high scores
obtained from the "Social Competence" subscale indicate that social skills are high, and when looking at the results obtained, it was determined that the resulting difference was in favor of girls. The high scores obtained from the "Tuesday-Aggression" subscale indicate that angry and aggressive behaviors are more, and accordingly, it has been found that male children exhibit more angry and aggressive behaviors.

It was found that the mean scores of the "Emotion Regulation" sub-dimension of the Emotion Regulation Scale did not differ significantly according to the gender of the children (p> .05). However, when the mean scores of the "Variability-Negativity" sub-dimension were examined, it was determined that there was a significant difference according to gender and that the observed difference was in favor of girls (p<.01).

According to Table 2, it was found that the total scores of the mothers participating in the study on the Family Child Relationship Scale, Warmth and Love, Aggression and Hatred, Apathy and Neglect, and Non-Segregated Rejection subscales did not differ significantly according to the age groups of the children (p> .05).

The "Social Competence" and "Anger- Aggression" subscales of the Social Competence and Behavior Assessment Scale of the children participating in the study differed significantly according to the age of the children (p<.001), it was found that the average score taken from the "Anxiety-Introversion" subscale did not differ significantly according to the age of the children (p> .05). When the table was examined, it was found that the average score of "Social Competence" of children in the 6-year-old group was higher than that of children in the 5-year-old group. When the average scores of children on the "Anger-Aggression" subscale were examined, it was determined that children in the 5-year-old group exhibited more angry and aggressive behavior than children in the 6-year-old group.
In Table 2, it was found that the mean scores of the "Emotion Regulation" and "Variability-Negativity" sub-dimensions of the Emotion Regulation Scale differed significantly according to the age of the children and it was determined that the difference was in favor of the 6 age group (p<.001). According to these results, the emotion regulation skills of children in the 6-year-old group are higher than those of children in the 5-year-old group.

Table 3
The Results of the Correlation Analysis Aimed at the Relationship Between the Acceptance Dec Rejection Levels of Mothers and the Social Competence Behaviors of Their Children

|                                | Social Competence | Anger-Aggression | Anxiety-Introversion |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| **Warmth and Love**            |                   |                  |                     |
| r                              | -115*             | 0.148*           | 0.030               |
| p                              | 0.046             | 0.010            | 0.602               |
| n                              | 303               | 303              | 303                 |
| **Aggression and Hatred**      |                   |                  |                     |
| r                              | -0.086            | 0.007            | -0.039              |
| p                              | 1.137             | 0.898            | 0.500               |
| n                              | 303               | 303              | 303                 |
| **Indifference and Neglect**   |                   |                  |                     |
| r                              | -0.070            | 0.026            | 0.028               |
| p                              | 2.224             | 0.650            | 6.22                |
| n                              | 303               | 303              | 303                 |
| **Unbundled Rejection**        |                   |                  |                     |
| r                              | -0.096            | 0.031            | 0.045               |
| p                              | 0.096             | 0.594            | 5.437               |
| n                              | 303               | 303              | 303                 |
| **Total Score of the Family Child Relationship Scale** |                   |                  |                     |
| r                              | -1.123*           | 0.074            | -0.012              |
| p                              | 3.032             | 0.196            | 8.39                |
| n                              | 303               | 303              | 303                 |

*p<.05

The mothers' acceptance-rejection behaviors of children with social competence levels according to Table 3, which examined the relationship between family-child relationships of the scale "warmth and affection" alt social competence and behavior evaluation Scale with the size of "social competency" between the way the negative subscale (R= -1.15 p<.05) and a decisively significant relationship between the "Anger-Aggression" subscale (r=0.148, p<.05). It has been observed that

There is a negative significant relationship between the total score of the Family Child Relations Scale and the "Social Competence" subscale of the Social Competence and Behavior Assessment Scale (r= -1.123, p< dec05) has been found. Contrary to these findings, the family-child relationships of the scale "aggression and hatred", "Indifference and neglect" and "Unsorted Refuse," sub-dimension of social competence and behavior evaluation scale points with an average of "social competence," "Anger-Aggression" and "Anxiety-introversion" sub-scales was a not significant relationship between observed that.
According to Table 4, it was found that there is a positive and significant relationship between the "Warmth and Love" sub-dimension of the Family Child Relationship Scale and the "Variability-Negativity" sub-dimension of the Emotion Regulation Scale ($r=0.128$, $p<0.05$). It was found that there was a negative and significant relationship between the "Decoupled Rejection" sub-dimension of the Family Child Relations Scale and the "Emotion Regulation" sub-dimension of the Emotion Regulation Scale ($r=-0.157$, $p<0.01$).

There is a negative direction between the total score of the Family Child Relations Scale and the "Emotion Regulation" sub-dimension of the Emotion Regulation Scale ($r=-0.115$, $p<0.05$) and there is a positive and significant relationship between the "Variability-Decadence" sub-dimension ($r=0.119$, $p<0.05$) has been found.

4. Discussion

Family-child relationships of the scale "warmth and affection" alt social competence and behavior evaluation Scale with the size of "social competence" subscale between the negative directional and "Anger-hostility-aggression subscale of the positive relationship between meaningful way, confirms the expected effects of parental behavior on the child's social development. In other studies conducted in the summer of the field, it shows that as parental interest/warmth increases, the child's social competencies increase (Metin-Orta, Hosiery, Rainy and Aksan, 2013). But the definition and perception of parental temperature vary culturally. A study conducted in Australia has found that the levels of positive behavior of Turkish immigrant children and Australian children are similar, but this is paralleled by different maternal behavior in two different cultures. It was found that the behavior of mothers in the Australian group showed persistent temperament and maternal warmth, and the submissive behavior of mothers in the Turkish group predicted positive social behaviors in the child.

In Turkey, studies conducted with preschool children and their mothers also reveal the positive effects of parental warmth/attention and acceptance on children's social competencies. For example, a study conducted by Gülay-Ogelman and Uçar-Sırık (2013) with 114.5-year-old children and their parents found that maternal acceptance determines the social position of children in preschool age. It has been observed that children who are highly accepted by their parents have a higher social position. Similarly, Tepeli and Yılmaz (2013), at the end of a study conducted with 359, 5-6 children and their mothers, found that high acceptance of mothers predicted high social problem-solving skills in children. Gülay (2011), in another study conducted with 277 children aged 5-6, found a positive relationship between parental acceptance and prosocial behaviors shown by children. In a study conducted by Akınçar (2009) with 123 mother-child pairs in the age group of 3, it was concluded that parental warmth/attention reduces externalization behavior problems in children. These studies demonstrate the role of parental behaviors on different dimensions of social development in parallel with each other and the results of this research.

It was found that there was a positive and significant relationship between the total score of the
Family Child Relationship Scale and the "Emotion Regulation" sub-dimension of the Emotion Regulation Scale with a negative direction and the "Variability-Dec Decency" sub-dimension. This result shows the positive and significant effect of maternal acceptance on children’s emotion regulation skills and coincides with the results of many studies in the field. A study conducted by Tepeli et al. (2014) shows that preschool children who are accepted by their mothers have a higher ability to understand emotions. The results of the study conducted by Metin (2010) with a 118, 3-6-year-old child, mother, and teacher partner revealed that only maternal sensitivity predicts the child’s difficulty in emotion regulation. These results support the results obtained within the scope of this research.

According to the results of the research, it was examined whether the level of parental acceptance and rejection differed according to the gender and age of the child. It was found that the total scores and averages of mothers on the Family Child Relationship Scale did not differ significantly according to the gender of their children. In parallel with the results of this research, it is observed that the level of acceptance-rejection of mothers does not differ depending on the gender of children (Çakıcı, 2006; Erkan & Toran, 2004; Gülçay-Ogelman & Uçar-Çık, 2013). However, the results of this research show that there is a differentiation in favor of girls in the "Warmth-Love" sub-dimension of the Family-Child Relations Scale. When the acceptance-rejection level was examined according to the age of the child, it was found that the acceptance level did not differ according to the age of the child. This result coincides with the results of research examining the level of admission by age (Ermcan & Röhner; 2006).

The results of the Social Competence and Behavior Assessment Scale showed that there was a gender difference in the sub-dimensions of "Social Competence" and "Resentment-Aggression", while girls were more socially competent and showed less aggressive behavior. This result shows aggressive behavior and less socially competent are more girls than boys, which coincides with the results of surveys (Arslan-Yalçın, 2009; Çorapçı and others, 2010; LaFreniere and others, 2002; Eisenberg and others, 2001). More girls than boys to be competent and less socially aggressive behavior genetic effects or family attitudes (Colder, Mott & Berman, 2002) that may be associated with advocating opinions. The results of this research can also be correlated with both opinions.

The "Social Competencies" of children were examined according to age and it was concluded that there was a difference in favor of the 6-year-old age group. Literature, social competence, and behavior evaluation scale of the research results by using the age of the participants grow, shows the increase of social competence (Arslan-Yalçın, 2009; LaFreniere and others, 2002; Eisenberg and others, 2003). The fact that social competence increases with age may be related to the fact that the child is in more social interaction (Howes & Phillipsen, 1998) and mental capacity development (LaFreniere et al., 2002). In this study, it was found that 5-year-old children showed more angry-aggressive behaviors than 6-year-old children. This result does not coincide with the results of a study conducted using the same scale as the Turkish sample and the findings of studies conducted with samples from China, Japan, and Brazil (Çorapçı et al., 2010). The lack of age-related difference in the Anxiety-Introversion sub-dimension has shown similarities with the results of many studies conducted in our country and around the world (LaFreniere et al., 2002; Çorapçı et al., 2010).

Another conclusion reached in the study is to determine the effect of children’s age on "Emotion Regulation" and "Variability-Negativity" scores. According to these results, the emotion regulation skills of children in the 6-year-old group are higher than those of children in the 5-year-old group. Emotions research to better understand and know who are displaying positive social behaviors at a higher level children and have demonstrated that they are more popular among their peers (Downs & Strand, 2008). When the studies conducted with preschool children in Turkey are examined, it is seen that high emotion regulation skills (Arslan-Yağçın, 2009; Metin-Orta et al., 2013) and high emotion comprehension skills have a relationship with social competence.

5. Conclusion

In summary, it has been found that the mother’s acceptance level didn’t differentiate according to age and gender of the child; however, the average scores of PARQ’s "warmth/affection" sub-
dimension have been differentiated in favor of the daughters. It has been found that the "Social Competence" and "Anger-Aggression" subscale of SCBE-30 were significantly differentiated according to gender. "Anger-Aggression" scores of the boys were higher than the girls, whereas "Social Competence" scores of the girls were higher than the boys. Moreover, it has been found that the "Lability-Negativity" subscale scores of the Emotion Regulation Checklist have been differentiated according to gender; with girls showing less labile/negative emotional reactions. Finally, it has been found that a child's social competence and emotional regulation skills increase as age increases.

The research shows the positive and significant relationship between parental acceptance, social decency, and emotion regulation skills. Similar research can be repeated with sample groups that will be selected to represent a wider population in the research that will be conducted. In this study, children's social competence and emotion regulation skills were measured only in the way that parents and teachers perceived, and there was no one-to-one assessment with children. In subsequent studies, these skills of children can be assessed using scales applied with children.

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