

## **The Study of the Effects of the Mother Support Education Program on the Parental Acceptance and Rejection Levels of the Turkish Mothers**

Ayşe Dilek Oğretir and İlkay Ulutaş

Department of the Child Development Education, Faculty of Vocational Education,  
Gazi University, Teknikokullar, Ankara 06500, Turkey

---

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to explore whether the mother support program has an effect on the parental acceptance/rejection levels. Fifty six mothers who have the 0-4 years old children in Turkey have participated in the study. The mother support program was used to support the parental acceptance. The mothers data were collected via the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Control Questionnaire (PARQ) and were analyzed using the t-test. The results has shown that the mother support education program have reduced parental rejection levels.

**Key words:** Parental acceptance • Parental rejection • Early childhood development • Parental sensitivity

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the literature, there are many different dimensions such as acceptance, affection control, warmth, permissiveness, restrictiveness and demandingness about the child rearing attitudes or parental behaviour [1]. Children all over the world need a specific form of positive response (acceptance) from parents and other attachment figures. When this need is not met satisfactorily, children everywhere regardless of variations in culture, gender, age, ethnicity, or other such defining conditions tend to report different types of behaviors and attitudes. For example, they are more hostile and aggressive, dependent or defensively independent, over impaired in self-esteem and self-adequacy, emotionally unresponsive and emotionally unstable and have a negative worldview. Additionally, youths and adults who perceive themselves to be rejected appear to be anxious and insecure, to be disposed toward behavior problems, to be depressed among other problems. They also report to be affected by the depression and to become involved in drug and alcohol abuse [2].

In accordance with the Maslow's need theory, being loved or accepted is one of the basic human needs. Being in a relationship with someone who cares for us can make a huge difference in the quality of life. The evolutionary developmental psychology perspective has been developed the parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory) that humans have evolved to have an emotional need for acceptance by significant others [3], especially attachment figures such as parents and intimate partners [4].

Many parenting factors associated with children development are consistent with the experience of parental acceptance and rejection. For example, perceived parental acceptance tends to include positive attachment to parents, mutual trust, positive communication and low resentment [5, 6]. Similarly, some of the psychological factors have also been reported to be associated with the form of psychological maladjustment known to be associated with parental rejection [3]. For example, negative self-esteem, low self-confidence, anxiety, excessive needs for approval, external locus of control and a negative sense of self-efficacy are all known to be associated with perceived parental rejection [6, 7]. When children do

---

**Corresponding Author:** Ayşe Dilek Oğretir, Department of the Child Development Education,  
Faculty of Vocational Education, Gazi University, Teknikokullar, Ankara 06500, Turkey

not get positive responses for their needs and the attachment figures do not satisfy them, they are biologically made susceptible to act emotionally and behaviorally with anxiety and insecurity. When children perceive rejection from their parents and feel unloved and neglected in their interactions with their parents, they tend to develop mental representations of themselves as being unlovable and incompetent. As a result, lack of acceptance (i.e., parental rejection) may lead to the development of maladaptive socioemotional and cognitive dispositions, including impaired self-esteem, emotional unresponsiveness and emotional instability [8].

Evidences from other studies reported that as much as 26% of the variability of children's psychological adjustment can be accounted for by the degree to which they perceive themselves to be accepted or rejected by their major caregivers. In addition, as much as 21% of the variability in adults' psychological adjustment can be explained by childhood experiences of caregiver acceptance-rejection. Of course, these figures leave a large portion of children's and adults' adjustment to be explained by a variety of factors such as other interpersonal relationships, sociocultural factors and behavioral genetic factors. Nonetheless, evidence reported here confirms that perceived parental acceptance-rejection by itself is universally a powerful predictor of psychological and behavioral adjustment [2].

For the past 20 years Baumrind conducted a longitudinal research that based on a series of researches to identify the parental behaviour and its association with children's behaviour. She found two major dimensions such as demandingness and responsiveness to understand and explain parenting style [1]. This study is based on the Parental Acceptance and Rejection Theory (PARTheory) postulated by Rohner [9]. The PARTheory attempts to explain and predict major psychological, emotional and maintenance systems antecedent to parental acceptance/ rejection.

The Parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory) predicts and explains major causes, consequences and other correlates of interpersonal--especially parental--acceptance and rejection by using an evidence-based theory of socialization and lifespan development within the United States and worldwide [3, 7, 10]. It has five classes of questions divided into three subtheories. These are personality subtheory, coping subtheory and sociocultural systems subtheory. Personality subtheory attempts to answer two general questions. First, is it true that children with different sociocultural systems, racial or ethnic groups, genders, etc. respond in essentially the same way when they perceive themselves to be accepted or rejected by their parents? Second, how and what degree do the effects of childhood rejection have effects into adulthood and old age? Coping subtheory inquires one basic question: What gives some children and adults the resilience to emotionally cope more effectively than most with the experiences of childhood rejection? Finally, sociocultural systems subtheory asks two very different classes of questions. First, why are some parents warm and loving and others cold, aggressive, neglecting/rejecting? Is it true that specific psychological, familial, community and societal factors tend to be reliably associated the world over with specific variations in parental acceptance-rejection? Second, in what way is the total fabric of society as well as the behavior and beliefs of individuals within society affected by the fact that most parents in that society tend to either accept or reject their children? For example, can the PARTheory predicts that a people's religious beliefs, artistic preferences and other expressive beliefs and behaviors tend to be universally associated with their childhood experiences of parental love and withdrawal [2].

It is important to note here that parental acceptance/rejection deals only with warmth and affection and the various ways warmth and affection can be shown to or withdrawn from children. Other dimensions of parental behaviour such as permissiveness and restrictiveness must not be confused with acceptance/rejection [11].

This study was conducted with a sample of Turkish young mothers to test the hypothesis whether the mother support education program affect their parental acceptance or rejection or not. Turkey is an appropriate location to test PARTheory's revised postulate. Turkey, which has been a typical country, is in transition in many aspects of family relationships, family-related values and laws. In traditional Turkey culture, "authoritarian father-affectionate mother" were the ideal parents. The father was the family head and the authority figure within the family, whereas the mother was the caregiver. However, with industrialization, fathers' roles in the family have shrunk and mothers' roles have expanded. Also, the rapid social, economic and cultural changes with globalization trends have changed the traditional Turkish family structures. This study aims to shed light on whether the mother support education program made a change on the parental acceptance and rejection levels.

## **METHODS**

**Participants:** Participants were 58 mothers, who have the 0-4 years old children. Sample was previously contacted through children birth records obtained from the Local Health Center, Ankara-Turkey. Fifty-seven percent of mothers was chosen to experimental group (n=37), forty-three percent of mothers was chosen to control group (n=34). On average, mothers were 35 years old, had 5 years of education; their 0-4 years old children were stay-at-home. The mothers have a low and low-middle social economic level with the monthly income ranged from 400 to 700 Euro. Fifty-five of mothers have two children. The twenty-nine percent of the 0-4 years of children are 2 years old and the twenty-eight percent of them are 3 years old.

### **Measures:**

**Parental Acceptance-rejection/control Questionnaire for Mothers (Parq/control: Mother):** The mother versions of the PARQ/Control [10] are designed to assess mothers' acceptance-rejection. The questionnaire consists of the five scales. These include parental warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, undifferentiated rejection and behavioral control. Collectively, the four acceptance-rejection scales consist of 60 items. Mothers responded to each item on a 4-point Likert-style scale from (4) *almost always true* to (1) *almost never true*.

The parental acceptance scores were obtained by summing the scores on the four scales (after reverse coding items on the warmth/affection scale). Summed scores range from 60 through 240. The lowest score of 60 reveals maximum perceived parental or paternal acceptance; the highest score of 240 reveals maximum perceived rejection (i.e., the lowest level of parental or paternal acceptance). Scores at or above 150 indicate individuals' perceptions of significantly more rejection than acceptance, scores between 140 and 149 indicate individuals' perceptions of considerable rejection, scores between 121 and 139 indicate individuals' perceptions of minor rejection and scores between 60 and 120 indicate individuals' perceptions of significantly more acceptance than rejection. The reliability and validity of the PARQ/Control have been well established. The mean effect size of coefficient alpha was 0.89 and the factor analyses with data from 10 nations generated the same factor structure [12]. Coefficient alphas for the acceptance-rejection portion of the PARQ/Control in this study were .78 for the mother version and 0.72 for the father version.

The adaptation and translation of the scale has been done by Anjel and Erkman. In the Turkish form, the total score of the reliability is 0.90. The sub-scale reliability for parental warmth/affection is 0.79, for hostility/aggression is 0.83, for indifference/neglect is 0.68 and for undifferentiated rejection is 0.59 [13, 14].

**Mother Support Education Program:** The mother support education program was prepared for the experimental group to inform mothers' on their children development and to increase their interaction with their children. In the program, the mothers have been educated on listening and learning skills, the understanding child's emotions and behaviors and the importance of toys and play on children development. The program was implemented by the researchers via the home visit. The home visit has two steps. The first step is to interview the mothers and give information about the education program every week. The second step is to teach the mothers' various children plays every week. The total home visits are 12 weeks. The home visit has lasted 40 minutes. In the first 20 minutes, the mothers have been talked about the education program. In the last 20 minutes, the mothers have been taught about children plays. The experimental group of the education program consists of 33 mothers. The control group of the education program has 25 mothers.

## **STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

Firstly, the PARQ mother scale was used to measure mothers acceptance/rejection levels a pre-test measure. After that the experimental group mothers have received the mother support education program. The control group mothers received the education program on the environmental problems and solutions. After the 12-week period of the experiment, both the experimental and control group was measured by the post-test.

The means comparisons of the PARQ were made between control and experimental groups. Besides that, t test analyses were computed firstly to see whether the experimental group of the study differ significantly on the PARQ and secondly to examine the gender difference or effect on the PARQ. The means and standard deviations of mothers are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Means and standard deviations of mothers

	Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig.
<b>Pre test</b>						
Warmth/affection	Experimental	31.5758	2.6579	.4627	2.132	.037
	Control	30.0800	2.6287	.5257		
Hostility/aggression	Experimental	32.6970	3.6528	.6359	1.330	.189
	Control	31.3600	3.9674	.7935		
Indifference/neglect	Experimental	33.3030	2.2843	.3976	.311	.757
	Control	33.0800	3.1744	.6349		
Undifferentiated rejection	Experimental	16.1212	1.3171	.2293	.180	.858
	Control	16.0400	2.1111	.4222		
Behavioral control	Experimental	35.8788	3.3518	.5835		
	Control	35.8400	2.0551	.4110		
Total PARQ	Experimental	33	149.5758	7.9334	1.401	.167
	Control	25	146.4000	9.3095		
<b>Post test</b>						
Warmth/affection	Experimental	31.6061	2.8716	.4999	-1.674	.100
	Control	32.7600	2.1848	.4370		
Hostility/aggression	Experimental	33.6667	3.1590	.5499	-2.725	.009
	Control	35.9600	3.1948	.6390		
Indifference/neglect	Experimental	34.1515	2.7171	.4730	-1.393	.169
	Control	35.0800	2.2159	.4432		
Undifferentiated rejection	Experimental	16.7273	2.6607	.4632	-5.444	.000
	Control	19.8800	1.3013	.2603		
Behavioral control	Experimental	35.6667	2.9861	.5198	-2.180	.033
	Control	37.2800	2.5087	.5017		
Total PARQ	Experimental	33	151.8182	8.6040	-4.509	.000
	Control	25	160.9600	6.1406		

Table 2: The comparison of the pre-test and post-test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Sig.
				Lower	Upper		
<b>Experimental Group pretest-posttest comparison</b>							
Warmth/affection	6.452E-02	3.5208	.6323	-1.2269	1.3559	.102	.919
Hostility/aggression	-.7419	5.0197	.9016	-2.5832	1.0993	-.823	.417
Indifference/neglect	-.8387	3.2873	.5904	-2.0445	.3671	-1.421	.166
Undifferentiated rejection	-.1613	2.2818	.4098	-.9982	.6757	-.394	.697
Behavioral control	.0000	4.2817	.7690	-1.5706	1.5706	.000	1.000
Total PARQ	1.6774	11.2083	2.0131	-2.4338	5.7887	.833	.411
<b>Control Group pretest-posttest comparison</b>							
Warmth/affection	-2.5926	2.9905	.5755	-3.7756	-1.4096	-4.505	.000
Hostility/aggression	-4.5926	4.3346	.8342	-6.3073	-2.8779	-5.505	.000
Indifference/neglect	-1.9259	3.9800	.7660	-3.5004	-.3515	-2.514	.018
Undifferentiated rejection	-4.1111	2.5318	.4873	-5.1127	-3.1095	-8.437	.000
Behavioral control	-1.0741	2.9342	.5647	-2.2348	8.667E-02	-1.902	.068
Total PARQ	14.2963	9.2770	1.7854	10.6264	17.9662	8.008	.000

The experimental group has been compared by the pre-test and post-test results. The results have shown that the post-test scores of the experimental group has decreased but the control group has increased. It is possible to conclude that the education program has an effect on the mothers' affection and rejection levels. The results of sub-scales indicated that the post-test mean result of warmth / affection for the experimental group is 31,60 and the control group is 32,76. In the hostility / aggression sub-scale, the mean score of the experimental group is 33,66 and the mean score of the control group is 35,96. The mean score of the experimental group in the indifference / neglect sub-scale is 16,72 and the control group is 19,88. The mean score of the experimental group in the behavioral control sub-scale is 35,66 and the control group is 37,28. The analysis of the post-test results indicated that the experimental and control group mothers have statistically significant differences. The mean scores in hostility/aggression, undifferentiated rejection and behavioral control sub-scales shown statistically significant results with t-test ( $P < 0.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). In terms of the PARQ scores, the mothers who educated with the program have lower scores on rejection scores than the mothers who were not educated with the program (Experimental group: 151,81; Control group: 160,96). The t-test results of the total PARQ scores indicated a statistically significant difference ( $t = -4.509$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

In Table 2, the control group has no statistically significant differences in pre-test and post-test results ( $p > 0.05$ ). In the control group, there was a statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $0.05$ ). The control group has not received the mother support education program and their rejection scores has increased. The results suggest that the mother support education program prevent the mothers' rejection scores keep increasing.

## **DISCUSSION**

The objective of the research is to study the effects of the mother support education program on mothers' acceptance and rejection levels. The results of the study has shown that the mothers who were educated with the mother education support program had lower rejection scores than the mothers who were not educated with the mother education support program. The increase in the total PARQ score means the increase on the rejection scores. As a result, the mother support education program had real effects on the experimental group mothers. Other studies indicated that low parental acceptance was related to their children's low social competence. The child's general feeling of well-being is dependent on parental sensitivity to the behavior and the emotions of toddlers [15]. The study is important because it covers the 0-4 years old children and their mothers. The first years in the child development is important since toddlers have in the process of the attachment. They expect psychological and physical support from their mothers. The other researches indicated that the children who receive healthy support and attachment to their mothers have shown strong and healthy personality development and have lower social and emotional problems. [16-19]. Lila, Garcia ve Gracia [20] claimed that the mother's acceptance level has a direct effect on the child's behavior problems.

Mothers' acceptance levels of their children have effects on the cognitive development of their children. Bárrig Jó [21] expressed that the mothers' sensitivity towards their children has a positive effect the children's attention skills. Lakshmi and Arora [1] reported that the parents' psychological and behavioral controls has negative effects on the children's academic performances. Rohner and Britner [8] claimed that parental rejection tends to produce psychological problems, behavior disorders and substance abuses and precede the development of a variety of mental health problems, such as depression and depressed effects in their longitudinal study. Other longitudinal studies indicated that there is a reciprocal and bidirectional relation between children's behavioral problems and parental rejection [22, 23].

In other studies on the education program showed that mothers who received the education program had a significant increase in consistency regarding acceptance behavior. In behavior management, the consistent use of positive or negative reinforcement is a crucial factor following the behavior. If parental behaviors are predictable and consistent, a child feels more safe and loving environment. As a result, it is important that parents have consistent and positive parenting behaviors and decreasing negative parenting behaviors.

One of the shortcomings of this study is that the sample size was small and might not represent the general Turkish population. Therefore, the findings must be viewed with caution. A longitudinal studies will be needed to detect a possible increase in mother acceptance and a decrease in children behavioral problems. However, the study is important for the child

development field because it focuses on the lower socio-economic level mothers who have the 0-4 years old children. Asscher, Hermanns Ve Dekovic [24] found in a similar study that the home-based education program for the mothers increased the mothers' sensitivity and decreased the children's behavior problems.

In order to generalize the findings in this study, future research is necessary with a larger sample and a longitudinal research design. With a longitudinal research, it is possible to observe the change in relationships among the study variables as children mature. Furthermore, relationships between parental acceptance-rejection, parental acculturation, parental mental health and children's adjustment problems need to be examined.

## REFERENCES

1. Lakshmi and Arora, 2006. Perceived Parental Behaviour as Related to Student's Academic School Success and Competence. *J.Indian Academy of Applied Psychol.*, 32(1): 47-52.
2. Rohner, R.P., A. Khaleque and D.E. Cournoyer, 2007. Introduction to parental acceptance-rejection theory, methods, evidence and implications. Downloaded from [http://www.cspar.uconn.edu/Introduction\\_to\\_Parental\\_Acceptance.pdf](http://www.cspar.uconn.edu/Introduction_to_Parental_Acceptance.pdf) by on December 30, 2008.
3. Rohner, R.P., 2004. The parental "acceptance-rejection syndrome": Universal correlates of perceived rejection. *American Psychol.*, 59: 827-840.
4. Chung, Y.J. and J. Lee, 2008. Intimate Partner Acceptance, Remembered Parental Acceptance in Childhood and Psychological Adjustment Among Korean College Students in Ongoing Intimate Relationships. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 42 (1): 77-86.
5. Hughes, M., M. Blom, R.P. Rohner and P. Britner, 2005. Bridging parental acceptance-rejection theory and attachment theory in the preschool strange situation. *Ethos*, 33: 378-401.
6. Rohner, R.P., A. Khaleque and D.E. Cournoyer, 2005. Parental acceptance-rejection theory, methods, evidence and implications. Retrieved January 27, 2005, from <http://vm.uconn.edu/~rohrner>
7. Rohner, R.P., 1986. *The warmth dimension: Foundations of parental acceptance-rejection theory*. Storrs, CT: Rohner Research Publications.
8. Rohner, R.P. and P.A. Britner, 2002. Worldwide mental health correlates of parental acceptance-rejection: Review of cross-cultural and intracultural evidence. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 36: 16-47.
9. Rohner, E.C., 1980. Perceived parental acceptance-rejection and children's reported personality and behavioral dispositions: An intracultural test. *Behavior Sci. Res.*, 15: 81-88.
10. Rohner, E.C., R.P. Rohner, 1980. Correlation between the child PARQ: Mother and the child PAQ in Enfield, Connecticut, USA. Unpublished raw data.
11. Rohner, R.P., 2005. Parental Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (PARQ/Control): Test manual. In R. P. Rohner and A. Khaleque (Eds.), *Handbook for the study of parental acceptance and rejection* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 137-186). Storrs, CT: Rohner Research Publications.
12. Khaleque, A. and R.P. Rohner, 2002. Perceived Parental Acceptance-Rejection and Psychological Adjustment: A Meta-Analysis of Cross-Cultural and Intracultural Studies. *J. Marriage and Family*, 64: 54-64.
13. Anjel, M., 1993. *The Transliterated Equivalence, Reliability and Validity Studies of the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) Mother-Form: A Tool For Assessing Child Abuse*. (Yayımlanmamış yüksek Lisans Tezi), Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, İstanbul.
14. Erkmán, F., 2004. The Relationship of Self Reported Physical Punishment of Parent Acceptance Rejection in Turkish Parents. Society For Cross Cultural Research (SCCR), 33rd Annual Meeting, San Jose: 18-22 February, [swennethall.sjsu.edu/eld/coed](http://swennethall.sjsu.edu/eld/coed).
15. Kivijärvi, M., H. Räsänen, S. Virtanen, K. Lertola and J. Piha, 2004. Parental sensitivity behaviour and infant crying, fussing and contented behaviour: The effects of mother's experienced social support. *Scandinavian J. Psychol.*, 45: 239-246.

16. Eisenberg, N., Q. Zhou, T.L. Spinrad, C. Valiente, R.A. Fabes and J. Liew, 2005. Relations Among Positive Parenting, Children's Effortful Control and Externalizing Problems: A Three-Wave Longitudinal Study. *Child Development*, 76,(5): 1055-1071.
17. Denham, S., 2007. Dealing with feelings: how children negotiate the worlds of emotions and social relationships. *Cognition, Creier, Comportament / Cognition, Brain, Behavior*. ISSN: 1224-8398 Volume XI, No. 1 (March), pp: 1-48.
18. Kim, E., K. Cain and M. McCubbin, 2006. Parental and Paternal Parenting, Acculturation and Young Adolescents' Psychological Adjustment in Korean American Families. *J. Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*,19 (3): 112-129.
19. Kim, Han and McCubbin, 2007. Korean American Parental Acceptance-Rejection, Acculturation and Children's Social Competence *Fam Community Health* 30(25): 533-545.
20. Lila, M., F. Garcia and E. Gracia, 2007. Perceived Paternal And Parental Acceptance And Children's Outcomes in Colombia. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 35(1): 115-124.
21. Bárrig J6, P.S., 2008. Parental Sensitivity As A Mediator Of Parental History Of Care And Children's Emotion Regulation And Attachment At 2 1/2 Years Of Age. Dissertation. The University Of Vermont.
22. Cohen, P. and J.S. Brook, 1995. The reciprocal influence of punishment and child behavior disorder. In J. McCord (Ed.), *Coercion and punishment in long-term perspectives* (pp: 154-164). New York: Cambridge University Press.
23. Gershoff, E.T., 2002. Parental corporal punishment and associated child behaviors and experiences: A meta-analytic and theoretical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128: 539-579.
24. Asscher, J.J., J.M.A. Hermans and M. Dekovi'c, 2008. Effectiveness of the Home-Start Parenting Support Program: Behavioral Outcomes For Parents And Children. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 29(2): 95-113.