

Research Article

Maternal relationships and motivation in gifted children¹

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Abstract

This study primarily investigates gifted children's and their mothers' acceptance-rejection and control perceptions and children's achievement motivation. The study was carried out with 5th and 6th year students attending Science and Art Centers in two cities in Turkey, and their mothers. The sample of this research consists of 226 students (103 girls and 126 boys) who attend Adana and Mersin Province Science and Art Centers in the 2014-2015 academic year, and 179 mothers. As data collection tools, Turkish Parent Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire/Control: Child (Short Form), Child Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire/Control: Mother (Short Form), and Scale of Motivation in Education were used. The results of the study showed that children and mothers perceived high level acceptance, low level rejection and mid-level control in their mother-child relationships. A significant difference was observed between mothers' and children's perceived parental acceptance-rejection and control. It was also seen that children's identified external motivation and intrinsic motivation levels were high and amotivation and introjected external motivation levels were low.

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Introduction

Families have an important role on gifted children to develop their abilities that they have. Academic and positive environment at home raises child's curiosity and furthers his academic interests (Campbell and Verna, 2007), so parents are guiding force in child's lives (Lindenfield, 2011). Parents whose children are gifted and high achieving show interest to their children they determine high objectives for their education (Clark, 2013, p.275).

Mother-child relationship was considered as a determining factor in child's personality development by Freud for the first time. The quality of the relationship with mother and mother's perception of child have been thought to be influential on person, himself and his perception of environment and his future relationship in his adolescence (Halisdemir, 2013, p.2, 3). Mother-child relationship was considered in the Attachment Theory by John Bowlby in 1969. According to this theory, why emotional connections human beings need to establish with each other is taken into account and it is mentioned that the relationship between mother and child is important on child's security feeling and psychological development (in Kaya Balkan, 2009, p.4).

There are studies showing that parenting attitudes are related to academic achievement in the related literature. In a study by Kağıtçibaşı, Bekman and Sunar (1993), it was found that children whose mothers were well-educated had higher achievement when compared to others. Studies showed that democratic parenting influenced academic achievement positively (Arslan, 2008; Yilmazer, 2007). Bourgeois (2012) found out that children whose parents had autonomy-supportive attitudes showed higher achievement. Children's perception of mother acceptance level affected their school performance (Gençtoprak, 2010; Yener, 2005). Kim and Rohner (2002) claimed that there was no link

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between parenting styles and children's academic performance but the more children received warmth and affection from their mothers, the more successful they were at school. In the same study, it was found out that mothers' inclusion into educational process and perceived mothers' warmth were related to academic scores. Similarly, as children's perceived mothers' acceptance increased, their school performance got better. This current study investigates children's relationships with their mothers and their achievement motivation in terms of parental acceptance-rejection theory.

Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory

Parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory), this is a socialization theory which explains the background, the related things and the results of parental acceptance-rejection theory (Rohner, Khaleque & Cournoyer, 2008, p.14). In 1960, Rohner started to search whether parental acceptance-rejection theory depends on culture or whether it is universal or not in different parts of the world and in different societies. The results of studies showed that parental acceptance-rejection is independent from class, race, ethnicity and culture and shows similar effects in all over the world (Rohner, 2000, p.67, 68). The theory proposes that the parental acceptance-rejection has deep effect on children's personality development during all their life. It also proposes that it is a main motivation for children to receive confirmation from parents and other important people around (Rohner & Khaleque, 2002, p.4).

In the theory, the parental acceptance-rejection makes up of warmth/affection dimension of parenting. The perception of parental acceptance-rejection by children is a continuum. There are expressions about parental acceptance on one end of the continuum and there are verbal positive and negative expressions about parental rejection (Rohner et al. 2008, p.5). Parental acceptance symbolizes warmth, love, affection that parents show to their children. The physical expressions of love appear through behaviours such as kissing, hugging and cuddling whereas verbal expressions of love come in utterances including praisal (Rohner, 2000, p.19, 20). Parental rejection is represented through lack of warmth and love or drawing back. Rejecting parents do not love and confirm their children. Also, they see their children as a load and compare them to others (Rohner, 1975, p.45).

According to the PARTheory, behaviour control means regulating, guiding or managing children's behaviours by their parents (Rohner & Khaleque, 2003, p.2). Behavioural control is handled in four categories: a) Low/lax control where parents rarely control their children's behaviours; b) Moderate control where parents sometimes control their children's behaviours; c) Firm control where parents generally control their children's behaviours; d) Strict/restrictive control where parents almost always control their children's behaviours and they expect their children to obey themselves (Rohner & Khaleque, 2008, p.107, 108).

The effect of parents' behaviours is shaped in child, himself, through the perception of the child. The results of the studies showed that parents and children do not have the same perspective about parents' love, needs and punishments. Parents often had wrong arguments about children's perceptions of parents (Rohner, 2000, p.24-27). Similarly, according to White (2009), gifted children expressed that they had positive relationship with their parents, however, parents of gifted children claimed that they had significantly more positive relationship with their children than expressed by their children. These children mentioned that their relationships with their mothers are better than their relationship with their fathers.

Another influential factor on academic achievement is motivation. High motivation is the characteristic that is observed in gifted children at most (for example: Chan, 2000). Phillips and Lindsay (2006) said that both internal and external motivation are important on students' achievement. Bourgeois (2012) added that gifted children with high motivation have high internal and external motivation.

Motivation: Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination means a person's internally and externally motivated behaviours stemming from his self-identity feeling based on his choices (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p.154-157). Self-determination theory aims at identifying factors which increase the innate potential, adaptation and well-being of an individual. Also, it is concerned with the processes and conditions which help and motivate individuals' groups' and communities' healthy development and effective work (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). In self-determination theory, the basic distinction is between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among different motivation types which are based on different reasons. Intrinsic motivation is concerned with accomplishing tasks because they are enjoyable, interesting and unique whereas extrinsic motivation involves in doing something (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

This theory starts to analyse from the situation of being demotivated in which there is no external regulation to extrinsic motivation which includes more self-determination regulations and to intrinsic motivation. It concentrates on the effects of internalisation and integration processes on the differentiation of the extrinsic motivation. The results

of the studies show that social environment supported by self-determined motivation provides the most convenient conditions for high quality education (Rigby, Deci, Patrick & Ryan, 1992, p.182).

Motivation is one of the descriptive characteristics of giftedness for gifted children. However, there are studies which show that gifted children's motivation is low and this is related to academic failure. Therefore; it seems important to analyse the factors which are influential on motivation. Low motivation may derive from different reasons such as family, school system, the self or environment. In this study, it has been thought important to focus on mother-child relationship and gifted children's motivation to develop their skills and for their healthy development.

Aims of the Study

In this study, in mother-child relations of gifted children; how mothers and children have perceptions of acceptance-rejection and control; whether there is a difference between the acceptance-rejection and control perception levels of mothers and children, and children's achievement motivations were examined.

The research main question is below;

What are the acceptance-rejection and control perceptions, and the children's achievement motivation levels of gifted children and their mothers in mother-child relationships?

And the sub-questions of the research are below;

- Is there a significant difference between the perceived acceptance-rejection and control perception levels of gifted children towards their mothers and the perceptions of acceptance-rejection and control perceived by mothers towards their children?
- What are the achievement motivations of gifted children?

Method

Research Design

This research, which examines the mother-child relationship and motivations of fifth and sixth grade students attending the Science and Art Center and their mothers, is quantitative research in the correlational survey model.

Participants

229 fifth and sixth grade students (103 female (45%) and 126 male (55%)) attending the Science and Art Centers in the 2014-2015 academic year in Adana and Mersin, two cities in the south of Turkey and 179 mothers participated in this study. The Science and Art Centers are educational institutions supporting gifted children. These are the special independent educational institutions to raise gifted children/students' awareness about their individual abilities and to guide them to make the most of their capacity (Ministry of the National Education Guidebook, 2007). Children who can pass the special ability examinations given by the Ministry of the National Education are accepted into these centers.

Data Collection Tools

Turkish Parent Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire/Control: Child (Short Form), (Turkish Parent PARQ/Control (Short Form))

Turkish Parent PARQ/Control (Short Form) evaluates mother's perception of acceptance-rejection of her child (Rohner, 2008, p.43). Also, regarding her child's behaviours, it considers mother's perceptions of her own wishes, directives, rules, orders, prohibitions and her insistence on following these (Rohner & Khaleque, 2008, p.107, 108). Official permission was received from the Center of Ronald and Nancy Rohner (Ronald and Nancy Rohner Center for the Study of Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection) to use the Turkish Parent PARQ/Control (Short Form). The inventory has 29 items and 5 sub-dimensions. The sub-dimensions are warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, undifferentiated rejection, control. The Turkish Parent PARQ/Control (Short Form) has a grading system of 4 Likert scale. The low scores received from the PARQ sub-dimensions means acceptance and high scores implied rejection. Parent Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire was adapted into Turkish by Anjel (1993) and its reliability and validity studies were completed. The short form of the Turkish Parent PARQ Control was translated by Selenga Gürmen (2012) and the control sub-dimension was translated into Turkish by Işık (2014).

In this research, the Cronbach Alpha values of the sub-dimensions of the Turkish Parent PARQ/Control (Short Form) was found to be .66 for warmth/affection, .69 for hostility/aggression, .39 for indifference, .15 for undifferentiated rejection, .52 for control. In this study, the undifferentiation rejection sub-dimension of the Turkish Parent PARQ/Control (Short Form) was not taken into account as its reliability was found to be low.

Child Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire/Control: Mother (Short Form)

(Child PARQ/Control: Mother (Short Form): Informed consent was received from the Center of Ronald and Nancy Rohner (Ronald and Nancy Rohner Center for the Study of Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection) to use the questionnaire. The Child PARQ/Control: Mother (Short Form) measures 9-17 aged children's perceived mother acceptance-rejection and their mothers' perceived behavioral control (Rohner & Khaleque, 2008). It was prepared parallel to the Turkish Parent PARQ/Control (Short Form). Child PARQ: Mother was adapted into Turkish by Polat (1988) and its validity and reliability studies were completed. Child PARQ/Control: Mother (Short Form) was adapted into Turkish by Erkman, Gülay and Avaz (2012). In this research, the Cronbach Alpha values of the Child PARQ/Control sub-dimensions were found to be .81 for warmth/affection, .64 for hostility/aggression, .74 for indifference/neglect, .65 for undifferentiated rejection and .43 for control.

Scale of Motivation in Education (SME)

Academic Motivation Scale was originally developed in French by Vallerand and his colleagues in 1989. It measures primary school students' motivation towards education (in Kara, 2008). This scale was adapted into Turkish by Kara (2008) as "Eğitimde Motivasyon Ölçeği" in Turkish (Scale of Motivation in Education). The Turkish adaptation of the scale has 12 items, 4 sub-dimensions and 3 point Likert scale. As the sample of this study consisted of the 5th and 6th graders. The Turkish adaptation of the inventory had 12 items, 4 sub-dimensions and 3-point-Likert scale. However; as the sample of this study consisted of 5th and 6th graders, Kara suggested using 5-point-Likert scale as in the original form, so it was decided to use 5-point-Likert scale. In this research, the reliability scores of the Scale of Motivation in Education sub-dimensions were found to be .81 for identified external motivation, .75 for amotivation, .73 for introjected external motivation and .88 for intrinsic motivation.

Procedure

For this research, the official permission was obtained from the Ministry of National Education, General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance and Counselling Services, Adana and Mersin Provincial Directorates for National Education in order to conduct the study in Adana and Mersin Science and Art Centers with the 5th and 6th grade students. Before the data collection was started, the appointments were taken from the directors of Adana and Mersin Science and Art Centers. The data collection was completed by the researcher and the mothers were contacted through their children and the inventories were sent to the mothers by their children. The directors, the teachers and the administrative staff of the schools helped to collect data from the mothers. It tooks 20 minutes for the students to fill in the inventories. Which years? Or educational term (Given in the Participants section)

Data Analysis

The data from the Turkish Parent PARQ/Control (Short Form), Child PARQ/Control: Mother (Short Form), the Scale of Motivation in Education and the Mother-child data collection forms were transferred to the computer and analysed through the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The significance level was accepted as .05. Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test were used to understand whether the inventories showed normal distribution or not, so non-parametric tests were used to analyse the data.

Results

This section includes the analysis of the data collected in the research and the findings obtained from these analyzes.

Findings on Acceptance-Rejection Perceptions and Control Levels of Gifted Children and Their Mothers

An analysis was made to determine the acceptance-rejection levels perceived by the mothers about their own behaviors in the mother-child relationship and the acceptance-rejection levels perceived by the children in the mother-child relationship, and the values of n, x and Ss are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Turkish Parent PARQ (Short Form), Child PARQ: Mother (Short Form); n, \bar{X} and Ss Values for Sub-Dimension Points

	PARQ Possible Scores			PARQ Mother			PARQ Child		
	Lowest	Highest	Midpoint	n	\bar{X}	Ss	n	\bar{X}	Ss
Warmth/Affection	8	32	20	179	8.99	1.73	229	9.97	3.07
Hostility/Aggression	6	24	15	179	8.53	2.52	229	8.04	2.39
Indifference/Neglect	6	24	15	179	7.84	1.92	229	8.07	2.52
Undifferentiated Rejection	4	16	10	-	-	-	229	4.76	1.38

Source: PARQ Possible Scores, Rohner (2008).

As seen in Table 1, the mothers' warmth/affection sub-dimension mean value is $\bar{X}=8.99$ and their hostility/aggression mean value is $\bar{X}=8.53$. The mothers' indifference/neglect sub-dimension mean value is $\bar{X}=7.84$. In this research, the Turkish Parent PARQ (Short Form) undifferentiated rejection sub-dimension was not considered as its reliability was found to be low. According to Table 1, the mean value of the warmth/affection sub-dimension is $\bar{X}=9.97$, the mean value of hostility/aggression is $\bar{X}=8.04$, the mean value of indifference/neglect is $\bar{X}=8.07$ and the mean value of undifferentiated rejection is $\bar{X}=4.76$. In line with these results, it can be said that there is a perception of high-level acceptance but low level rejection in mother-child relationships in this study.

The scores of the mothers obtained from the PARQ / K-Mother's control sub-dimension and the children's scores (obtained) from the Child PARQ / K-Mother control sub-dimension were analyzed according to the evaluation criteria and the frequency and percentage distributions according to the control levels are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage Values According to Control Sub-Dimension Levels of Mothers and Children

Control Levels	For Mothers		For Children	
	f	%	f	%
Low/Lax Control (5 to 9 points)	7	3.9	17	7.4
Moderate Control (10 to 14 points)	82	45.8	140	61.1
Firm Control (15 to 17 points)	72	40.2	58	25.3
Strict/Restrictive Control (18 to 20 points)	18	10.1	14	6.1

As seen in Table 2, 7 mothers (3.9%) perceive controlling their children's behaviours as low/lax control, 82 mothers (45.8%) perceive as moderate control, 72 mothers (40.2%) perceive as firm control, 18 mothers (10.1%) perceive as strict/restrictive control.

When Table 2 is considered, it is seen that 17 children (7.4%) perceive their mothers' controlling their behaviours as low/lax control, 140 children perceive as (61.1%) moderate control, 58 children (25.3%) perceive as firm control and 14 children ((6.1%) perceive as strict/restrictive control.

Accordingly, it can be said that both mothers and children perceive each other's controlling as mid-level, moderate control and firm control, which are between low/lax control and strict/restrictive control.

The results of the Mann-Witney U test conducted in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between the levels of acceptance-rejection and control that the mothers perceive about their own behaviors and the children perceive from their mothers are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Turkish Parent PARQ (Short Form), Child PARQ: Mother (Short Form) Mann-Whitney U Test Results on Sub-Dimension Scores

(Sub-dimension)		n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	z	p
Warmth/ Affection	Mother	179	165.06	29546.50	13436.50	-2.874	.004**
	Child	179	193.94	34714.50			
Hostility/ Aggression	Mother	179	189.66	33950.00	14201.00	-1.890	.059
	Child	179	169.34	30311.00			
Indifference/ Neglect	Mother	179	179.04	32048.50	15938.50	-.086	.932
	Child	179	179.96	32212.50			
Control	Mother	179	199.08	35635.00	12516.00	-3.604	.000**
	Child	179	159.92	28626.00			

As seen in Table 3, the results of Mann-Whitney U test, which was implemented to find out whether there was a statistically significant difference between the scores of Turkish Parent PARQ (Short Form) and Child PARQ: Mother (Short Form) sub-dimensions, revealed that the difference between the mean scores of warmth/affection sub-dimension (U=13436.50, p<.01) and the difference between the mean scores of control sub-dimension (U=12516.00, p<.01) were statistically significance.

These findings show that the children's perceptions of warmth, affection and control were less than the mothers' (high scores in the sub-dimension of warmth/affection mean that less affection is perceived).

Findings on the Achievement Motivation of Gifted Children

An analysis was made to determine the identified extrinsic motivation, unmotivation, intrinsic extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation levels of the children, and the n and Ss values of the scores they got from the SME sub-dimensions are given in Table 4.

Table 4.

Descriptive Statistics for Children's Scale of Motivation in Education Subscale Scores

	n	Scale of Motivation in Education		\bar{X}	Ss
		Lowest Score	Highest Score		
Identified External Motivation	229	3	15	14.06	1.82
Amotivation	229	3	15	4.56	2.39
Introjected External Motivation	229	3	15	4.14	1.99
Intrinsic Motivation	229	3	15	12.60	2.96

It is presented in Table 4 that the children's mean scores in the sub-dimension of identified external motivation was $\bar{X}=14.06$, of amotivation was $\bar{X}=4.56$, of introjected external motivation was $\bar{X}=4.14$ and of intrinsic motivation was $\bar{X}=12.60$. According to these findings, it can be said that the children's identified external motivation and intrinsic motivation were high and their amotivation and introjected external motivation were low.

Discussion

In this research, the mother-child relationship, the relationship of the children's perceptions of mother acceptance-rejection and control and their motivation were investigated and discussion and comments were presented about the results.

Gifted Children and Their Mothers' Acceptance-Rejection Perceptions and Their Control Levels

It was found in this research that both mothers and children perceive acceptance at high level, rejection at low level and control at mid-level in the mother-child relationships. In the literature, some research results that show the parents of gifted children report a democratic, supportive and positive relationship were reached (Ataman, 2008; Bourgeois, 2012; Uyaroglu, 2011; White, 2009). Clark (2013) states that the parents of the children with high academic achievement care about their children and the mothers are responsible individuals. When the literature was reviewed, it was seen that there were studies in which it was determined that the number of the children who perceive high level mother acceptance and mid-level control was majority (Bakir, 2015) and the parents allow their children freedom while they are fulfilling their academic tasks (Bourgeois, 2012). There are also some studies which show that the relationships of the children with their parents were positive (White, 2009). It is believed that this finding of the research is important and useful for the gifted children to maintain their developments sturdily.

When the acceptance-rejection and control levels of the mothers and children which they perceive in the mother-child relationship were compared, it was seen that there was a significant difference in the warmth/affection and control sub-dimensions of Turkish Parent PARQ (Short Form), Child PARQ: Mother (Short Form). The difference in the sub-dimension of warmth/affection results from the fact that the children perceived less warmth and affection than their mothers reported and the difference in the sub-dimension of control results from the fact that the children perceived less control than their mothers reported. When the literature was reviewed, it was found that the mother acceptance level of the children were less than their mothers reported (Rohner et al. 2005) and the acceptance-rejection perceptions of children and their mothers were close to each other. In White's (2009) study, it was determined that the parents believed that they were mostly moderate and supportive to their children and the children perceived their parents as critical and intrusive although both the mothers and the children reported a positive relationship. This finding of the research shows that the children perceive less affection and control than their mothers report. PARTheory assumes that individuals' perceptions, interpretations or analyses are more effective in human behaviours than objective incidents. PARTheory places emphasis on warmth, hostility or apathy experiences that the child perceives in the cases in which the parents' and the children's perceptions of parent-child relationship are different from each other (Rohner, 2000, p.24-27).

Gifted Children's Motivation

In this research, it was found out that the identified external motivation and intrinsic motivation levels of the children were high and amotivation and introjected external motivation levels of the children were low. The literature review

provided us with some studies which reveal that gifted children are quite motivated as they display intrinsic and external motivations (Al-Dhamit and Kreishan, 2016), gifted children are compatible with intrinsic motivation (Skollingsberg, 2003), gifted children have high motivation levels towards science and technology lesson (Et, 2013). The children's having high level of both intrinsic motivation and identified external motivation can be considered as important characteristics for their academic lives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has provided an insight about how the mother acceptance-rejection and control level are perceived by the mother and the child and they have with the children's achievement motivations.

As a result of the study, it was determined that mothers perceived their behaviors towards their children as highly accepting and they perceived their children's behaviors towards control as moderately controlling. Children, on the other hand, perceived their mothers as highly accepting and found their mothers' behaviors as moderately controlling. However, when the perceived acceptance-rejection and control levels of mothers and children were compared, children stated that they perceived less warmth/love from their mothers and perceived their mothers as less controlling. In summary, it has been determined that gifted children and their mothers have different perceptions of love and control in the mother-child relationship. This result gives an idea about the emotional characteristics of children. Examining the sources of difference can provide a basis for research on this subject in terms of the development of the child. Another finding of this study is that children have high levels of identified extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation; amotivation and introjected extrinsic motivation levels were determined to be low. This result is a positive feature for the academic life of gifted children. These results can form a basis for revealing the motivation differences in different sample groups (non-gifted) and examining the motivation sources in different samples.

Recommendations for Further Study

In this study, mother-child relationship and motivation levels of gifted children were examined. Differences can be revealed by conducting comparative research with different groups (non-gifted children, socio-economic level, etc.) on the subject. Studies that reveal the motivational elements of the mother-child relationship can be planned.

Recommendations for Applicants

Based on the results of this research, informative seminars can be given to school psychologists, teachers and families about gifted children's mother-child relationships, motivation levels and the effects of these characteristics on the socio-emotional structure of children.

Limitations of Study

Size of the sample and research method (the quantitative) might bring out some limitations. The mothers could not be reached directly. The interviews with the mothers and their children might have provided more information about the study. Mixed methods, the data obtained from other sources (evaluations in this study were only based on self-declaration) and longitudinal design can be considered for this kind of researches. This can present us more reliable and valid data.

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