

The Relationship between Students' Self-esteem and Parental Attitudes in Turkish Society

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between middle school students' self-esteem and their perceived parental attitudes. This study follows a screening model, which utilizes the scales that measures the students' perception of parental attitudes and self-esteem. This study was conducted on students in nine public middle schools in Istanbul during the 2012-2013 academic year. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was utilized for data analysis. The results indicate that students mostly perceive their parents' attitudes as democratic. Moreover, it was observed that students had high self-esteem. As the democratic attitude, which is one of the sub-dimensions of parental attitudes, increases, a student's self-esteem also increases. However, when the parents' protective demanding and authoritarian attitudes increase, a student's self-esteem decreases.

INTRODUCTION

Family is the most important and probably the most influential social entity in passing down the values of a society from generation to generation, in socializing a child and in helping them learn social roles (Tan and Baloglu 2013). A quality family environment is closely related to a child's formation of a balanced and well-adjusted personality. The parents' trust forms the basis of the relationship with a child, birth onwards and their attitudes towards the child form the basis for that child's relationship with the external world in later years (Kuzgun and Eldeleklioglu 2005). The problems about children and their environments are usually products of unsuccessful relations between the mother, father and child (Ustun et al. 2007). According to Kulaksizoglu (2008), one of the main factors that influence a child's psychosocial development is the parental attitude. For an individual, having a balanced and well-adjusted personality is closely related to the quality of the family environment. Parental attitudes are defined as a phenomenon that entails the parents' values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors towards their children.

Yavuzer (2011) states that parental attitudes have two dimensions: "emotional relationship dimension" and "supervision dimension". It can be observed that the emotional relationship dimensions range from accepting attitudes that place the child in the center of the rejecting attitude. In addition, Yavuzer (2011) states that the

supervision dimensions range from a restrictive attitude to a tolerant attitude. A child wants parental approval in a warm interactive environment. At the same time, the child is afraid of losing his/her parents' love. Therefore, many researchers have stated that parents do not need to resort to tough disciplinary measures while raising a child in line with proper behavioral patterns in a healthy interaction environment.

Kuzgun and Eldeleklioglu (2005) classified parental attitudes in Turkey into three categories. These are the Democratic Parent Attitude, Authoritarian Parent Attitude and Protective-Demanding Parent Attitude. These attitudes are considered to be important variables that impact the socialization of a child.

The democratic parent attitude is based on acknowledging the existence of a child and respecting his/her desires (Demiriz and Ogretim 2007). Children that are raised in democratic environments are more inclined to have an improved mental development (Eldeleklioglu 1996). Moreover, parents with democratic attitudes towards their children manage their children's behavior more rationally, accept them as individuals, value them and encourage them to develop independent personalities (Kulaksizoglu 2008).

Parents with authoritarian attitudes want to mold their child into a shape they desire. The child is under constant supervision. In this case, even the smallest mischiefs of children are not ignored, they are emphasized and an effort is made to correct them. The child is condemned

for speaking without permission or uttering bad words. Children raised with an authoritarian attitude, either become silent, docile and meek or resentful and aggressive (Sargin 2001). However, most researchers argue that in both cases the child is full of hatred and fear. For example, Sargin (2001) states that in such a case the child carries out responsibilities assigned to him/her but cannot manage himself/herself in the absence of a grown-up. Children who have higher levels of parental stress tend to have behavior problems and developmental delays (Baker et al. 2003; Neece et al. 2012).

It is hard for children raised in extremely protective families to form healthy relationships outside their families (Eldeleklioglu 2004). These children cannot decide for themselves, and cannot do anything without asking others, and have poor entrepreneurial skills. Since they are not given an environment in which to improve their manipulative skills, these children are awkward, clumsy and therefore have low self-confidence. They express their desires by whining. They cry, show reluctance and act stubbornly until their desires are fulfilled (Tola 2003).

Self-esteem is one's positive and negative behavior towards himself/herself (Rosenberg 1965). Harter (2006) defines self-esteem as an evaluation of an individual's self by himself or herself. The attitude of parents towards their child and how the child perceives this attitude impacts the child's self-esteem. Self-esteem increases with the support from family (Eksi 2003). Many factors, such as the relations between parents, the family environment in which the child is raised, the child's compliance with his/her parents' expectations, the number of siblings, gender, the child's characteristics, the socio-economic status of the family and the cultural traits of the family, play a defining role in a child's self-esteem (Uzuner 2003). Self-esteem is one's satisfaction with himself/herself without considering himself/herself inferior or superior to how he/she is. It means finding oneself worthy of admiration and love. It is a positive mental state that leads one to accept and trust himself/herself as he/she really is (Yorukoglu 2007).

A child with high self-esteem considers himself/herself to be positive and feels good about his/her strengths. A child with self-confidence improves his/her weaknesses. Such children are more tolerant and independent in interpersonal

relations (Pope et al. 1988). Individuals with high levels of self-esteem are better able to deal with problems such as family's social exclusion (Mcinerney et al. 2013). Individuals with high self-esteem are more efficient at solving interpersonal problems and they share more information and positive connections within groups (Dorak 2015; Sar et al. 2015). On the other hand, a child with low self-esteem tries to find evidence to reaffirm his/her negative thoughts about himself/herself. Such a child might start to misinterpret everything others say and do so in an effort to obtain more experiences to support his/her negative self-consciousness. If a child depends on external sources to maintain his/her self-esteem, he/she might experience other troubles that he/she might not be able to overcome (Plummer 2011).

An analysis of related studies indicates that if a child has unhealthy family relations, this influences his/her mental and physical health negatively (Sarper 2001). For instance, children of problematic families are not only shy, but they also have low self-esteem (Farahati 2011). According to Simsek (2006), as authoritarian attitude increases, social skills, emotional awareness, self-awareness and empathy skills decrease in children. On the other hand, the children's self-awareness, emotional awareness and empathy skills and social skills increase in families with democratic attitudes. It has also been concluded that female students perceive parents' attitude more democratic in comparison to male students and that male students perceive parents' attitude as more authoritarian and protective demanding compared to female students (Yilmaz 2009).

Social culture is passed down mostly to new generations through their family (parents). Therefore, Kulaksizoglu (2008) argues that it is necessary to analyze parent attitudes and the impact of these attitudes on children and young people. However, an analysis of studies in Turkey reveals that there are not many studies on this issue. In this regard, the aim of this study is to analyze the relationship between the parental attitude and the self-esteem of middle school students in Istanbul. In this context, the study aimed to address the question of whether there is a significant relationship between the sub-dimensions of perceived parental attitudes (democratic attitude, protective-demanding attitude, and authoritarian attitude) of middle school students and their self-esteem.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is a quantitative research design and employs a screening model. A relational screening model is the research design that tries to determine the existence or degree of co-change between two or more variables (Creswell 2012). The associations found through screening do not offer a real causal link, yet they allow predictions on one variable if the state of the other variable is known (Karasar 2006).

Participants

The participants of this study included 526 students studying in the 6th or 7th grade from nine public middle schools in Istanbul. The sample for the study was selected through simple random sampling. The sample included 249 males and 276 females. Of the total 526 students, 276 participants were 6th graders and 254 of them were 7th graders.

Research Process

The study was conducted between October and December in 2012. The consents of researchers who developed the scales employed in the study were sought in data collection. Additionally, in order to administer the scales, the ethics committee permission dated November 2012 and numbered IRB# MEB-157453 was obtained from the Directorate of National Education in Istanbul. The schools in which the study was conducted were determined through random selection. School counselors in selected schools were informed and their help was sought in administering the study. The data was collected on a voluntary basis. The research topic was explained to the students before each administration. In order to ensure that the students' answers were candid, they were informed about the aim and the importance of the study and that their personal identification information and data collection would be kept anonymous. Moreover, students were informed on how to respond to the data collection tools. The students took approximately 35 minutes to answer the questions.

Data Collection Tools

Perceived Parental Attitude Scale (ABT)

In order to determine the students' perceived parental attitudes, the Perceived Parental Attitude Scale developed by Kuzgun and Eldeleklioglu (2005) was employed in the study. The scale consists of 40 questions and three sub-dimensions. These are, Democratic Parent Attitude, Authoritarian Parent Attitude and Protective-Demanding Parent Attitude. Scoring high in the scale is taken as an indicator of the fact that parental attitude is high in the given dimension.

Perceived Parental Attitude Scale is a 5-point Likert scale. Participants rate items on a scale of 1 to 5. Participants stated their attitudes to each item by selecting one of the categories: "Totally Inappropriate", "Slightly Appropriate", "Partly Appropriate", "Relatively Appropriate" and "Totally Appropriate".

The internal consistency coefficient of the Perceived Parental Attitude Scale was found to be .89 for the democratic attitude, .82 for the protective-demanding attitude and .78 for the authoritarian attitude (Kuzgun and Eldeleklioglu 2005).

Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale

It was developed by Rosenberg (1965) as a self-esteem measurement tool for teenagers. Cuhadaroglu translated the scale into Turkish and conducted reliability and validity tests and adapted it for Turkey.

The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient reported in the adaptation study of the scale is .76. The reliability coefficient obtained after the test-retest method run in 4-week intervals is .71. A high score obtained from the scale after converting reverse coded items indicates the self-esteem. The 10-item scale, which includes 5 positive and 5 negative items, is a 4-point Likert scale. A high score from the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale indicates low self-esteem. The responses in the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale are evaluated on a scale of 1 to 6. In analyzing the scores, it is accepted that those with 1-2 points have "high" self-esteem, those with 3-4 points have "moderate" self-esteem and those with 5-6 points have "low" self-esteem (Cuhadaroglu 1986).

Data Analysis

The data from the study was analyzed using the SPSS 16.0 statistics package program. In order to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the sub-dimensions of perceived parental attitudes (democratic attitude, protective-demanding attitude, and authoritarian attitude) of students and their self-esteem, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient method was utilized.

RESULTS

The results of finding are shown in Table 1. According to the findings, 249 (47.3%) students are males and 277 (52.7%) of them are females. As for students' mothers, 60 (11.4%) of them did not graduate from any school, 190 (36.1%) of them graduated from primary school, 105 (20%) graduated from middle school, 135 (25.7%) of them graduated from high school and 36 (6.8%) of them graduated from a university or studied beyond the graduate level. As for students' fathers, 27 (5.1%) of the fathers did not graduate from any school, 156 (29.7%) of them graduated from primary school, 128 (24.3%) of them graduated from middle school, 137 (26%) of them graduated from high school and 78 (14.8%) of them graduated from a university or studied beyond graduate level. As for number of siblings, 56 (10.6%) of the students have one sibling, 216 (41.1%) of the students have two siblings, 133 (25.3%) of the students have three siblings, and 121 (23%) of the students have four or more siblings. As for income level, 73 (13.9%) of the students stated that they were in the low and lower middle income level group, 314 (59.7%) of the students stated that they were in the middle income level group and 139 (26.4%) of the students stated that they were in the upper and high income level group. As for having parents, 514 (97.7%) of the students stated that both their parents were alive and 12 (2.3%) of the students stated that either their father or mother was deceased, 490 (93.2%) of the students stated that their parents were married and 36 (6.8%) of the students stated that their parents were divorced.

Findings Related to the Sub-Research Question of the Study

Is there a significant relationship between the sub-dimensions of perceived parental attitudes (democratic attitude, protective-demand-

Table 1: Findings on the general structure of the group

	N	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	249	47.3
Female	277	52.7
<i>Mother's Education Level</i>		
Not a graduate of any school	60	11.4
Primary school	190	36.1
Middle school	105	20.0
High school	135	25.7
University and above	36	6.8
<i>Father's Education Level</i>		
Not a graduate of any school	27	5.1
Primary school	156	29.7
Middle school	128	24.3
High school	137	26.0
University and above	78	14.8
<i>Number of Siblings</i>		
1 sibling	56	10.6
2 siblings	216	41.1
3 siblings	133	25.3
4 siblings and more	121	23.0
<i>Income Level</i>		
Low and below middle class	73	13.9
Middle class	314	59.7
Upper and high	139	26.4
<i>Are Your Parents Alive?</i>		
Alive	514	97.7
Dead	12	2.3
<i>Parents' Marital Status</i>		
Married	490	93.2
Divorced	36	6.8
Total	526	100

ing attitude, authoritarian attitude) of middle school students and their self-esteem?

In this part of the study, the results of the analysis are presented, on whether there is a significant relationship between the sub-dimensions of perceived parental attitudes (democratic attitude, protective-demanding attitude, authoritarian attitude) of middle school students and their self-esteem.

Findings on the Sub-dimensions of the Parental Attitude Scale and Self-esteem

As it can be seen in Table 2, the arithmetic mean of the students' scores in the Parental Attitude Scale was calculated to be $\bar{X}=4.23$, the standard deviation was calculated as $ss=0.66$ and the standard error of the mean was calculated to be $Sh_x=0.03$. The arithmetic mean of students' scores on the protective/demanding dimension was calculated to be $\bar{X}=3.04$, the standard error

was calculated to be $ss=0.67$ and the standard error of the mean was calculated to be $Sh_x=0.03$. The arithmetic mean of the students' scores on the authoritarian attitude dimension was calculated to be $\bar{X}=2.15$, the standard deviation was calculated to be $ss=0.75$ and the standard error of the mean was calculated to be $Sh_x=0.03$. The arithmetic mean of the students' scores on the *self-esteem scale* was calculated to be $\bar{X}=1.80$, the standard deviation was calculated to be $ss=1.45$ and the standard error of the mean was calculated to be $Sh_x=0.06$.

Table 2: The arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and standard error values of students' scores from the sub-dimensions of the parental attitude scale and the self esteem scale

Score	N	\bar{x}	ss	Sh_x
Democratic attitude	526	4.23	0.66	0.03
Protective/Demanding attitude	526	3.04	0.67	0.03
Authoritarian attitude	526	2.15	0.75	0.03
Self- esteem	526	1.80	1.45	0.06
Total	526			

After the results above were evaluated, it could be stated that most of the students who perceived their parents' attitudes as democratic have high a self-esteem.

Findings on the Sub-dimensions of the Parental Attitude Scale and Self Esteem

Table 3: The relationship between the scores from the parental attitude scale and the scores from the self-esteem scale

Variables	N	R	p
Democratic attitudeself-esteem	526	-.408	P<.001
Protective/-demanding attitude self esteem	526	.218	P<.001
Authoritarian attitude self-esteem	526	.422	P<.001

As can be seen in Table 3, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis was conducted to determine whether there was a significant correlation between the scores from the democratic attitude scale. One of the sub-dimensions of the parental attitude scale, and the scores from self-esteem scale indicated a negatively significant correlation between the variables ($r=-.408$; $p<.001$). As the democratic attitude scores

increase in a family, the self-esteem scores decrease. In other words, an increase in the amount of parents' democratic attitude results in an increase in a student's self-esteem.

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis was conducted to determine whether there was a significant correlation between the scores from the protective-demanding attitude scale, and the scores from the self-esteem scale indicated a significant correlation between variables ($r=.218$; $p<.001$). As the protective-demanding attitude scores increase in a family, self-esteem scores increase. In other words, an increase in the amount of parents' protective-demanding attitudes results in a decrease in student's self-esteem.

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis was conducted to determine whether there was a significant correlation between the scores from the authoritarian attitude scale, and the scores from self-esteem scale indicated a significant correlation between variables ($r=.218$; $p<.001$). As the authoritarian attitude scores increase in a family, self-esteem scores also increase. In other words, an increase in the amount of parents' authoritarian attitude results in a decrease in student's self-esteem.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study are similar to the results from many other studies. For example, Kuzgun (1972) concludes that democratic parental attitude is the most favorable approach for a child to realize himself/herself, whereas an authoritarian attitude prevents a child from realizing himself/herself. Simsek (2006) concludes that there is significant correlation between the sub-dimensions (democratic, protective, authoritarian) of parental attitudes and five sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence. Children's self-awareness, emotional awareness and empathy and social skills increase in families with democratic attitudes. As authoritarian attitude increases, social skills, emotional awareness, self-awareness and empathy skills decrease in children. A study by Baldwin (1995) found that a democratic attitude had a positive impact on a child's development. Bilal (1984) concludes that compared to authoritarian parents, parents that exhibit democratic attitudes will offer more favorable condi-

tions in terms of social adaptation and general adaptation levels. Orgun (2000) indicates that children raised in a democratic family environment have high self-esteem, while those raised in authoritarian or protective-demanding family environments have low self-esteem. Ozdemir et al. (2012) concluded that a democratic parent attitude is the best attitude for character development. In addition, they assert that the best family climate for the sense of responsibility to develop is the one where democratic attitudes are displayed. Haktanir and Baran (1998) concluded in their study that democratic parental attitudes lead a young person to develop high self-esteem, while authoritarian and negligent parental attitudes lead to low self-esteem. Moreover, they concluded that a positive parental attitude leads a child to develop positive emotions about himself/herself. Torucu (1990) concluded that democratic attitudes have a favorable impact on self-esteem while authoritarian and negligent attitudes have a negative impact on self-esteem. Erdogan and Ucuoglu (2011) found that children and adolescents who have authoritative parents do not have problematic behaviors or do not accept such kind of behaviors and have remarkable success at their school environment. On the other hand, they reached the conclusion that these children and adolescents have low self-esteem, high anxiety about being evaluated by others, disposed to have depression and low self-efficacy to deal with problems. Hatun (2012) concluded that children who identify their mothers' attitudes as oppressive-authoritarian and overprotective perceive the problem-solving and communication roles of the family less healthy, compared to children who identify their mothers' attitude as reassuring-supportive. It has been found in Koroglu and Bayraktar's (2010) studies that shyness character traits diminish as democratic attitudes increase, and shyness character traits increase when protective, eager and authoritarian attitudes increase. Capulcuoglu and Gunduz (2013) suggested that the exhaustion of children of parents who exhibit democratic attitudes decreases while the exhaustion of children with parents who exhibit protective-demanding attitudes increases. Moreover, it has been concluded that authoritarian attitudes hinder children's independent character development, making these children develop a character influenced by outside inspections, the children of the families having this attitude experience problems in

their social relationships, increase violence level especially for boys, and decrease the level of self-respect (Larson et al. 2002; Sezer 2010).

CONCLUSION

This study indicated that students' points from the parent attitude sub-dimension are calculated as $\bar{X}=4.23\pm 0.66$, points from protective/willing attitude sub-dimension are calculated as $\bar{X}=3.04\pm 0.67$, points from authoritarian attitude sub-dimension are calculated as $\bar{X}=2.15\pm 0.75$, and points from self-respect questionnaire sub-dimension are calculated as $\bar{X}=1.80\pm 1.45$. Throughout, the findings of this study showed that the perceived parental attitudes of students who form the sample of this study is assessed, it is observed that students mostly perceive their parents' attitudes as democratic and when the self-esteem of students is evaluated, it is observed that they have high self-esteem. Based on these results, it is concluded that the students who perceive the attitudes of their parents as democratic will have a high self-esteem. The results of the study suggest that the correlations between all of the sub-dimensions of perceived parental attitudes and self-esteem are significant. Results also showed that, the democratic attitude exhibited by parents, increases a student's self-esteem. However, when the protective-demanding and authoritarian attitudes increase, a student's self-esteem decreases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study, the following suggestions can be made to parents, researchers and practitioners in the field:

1. It was found in the study that democratic parental attitudes have a positive impact on the students' self-esteem. Therefore, in order to increase students' self-esteem, families might be advised to exhibit democratic attitudes.
2. It was found in the study that authoritarian parental attitudes have a negative impact on the students' self-esteem. Therefore, school counselors might meet with parents and help families correct their wrong attitudes.
3. School counselors might identify students with low self-confidence and plan and im-

- plement psychological counseling processes for individuals and groups.
4. Teachers might be advised to support children with low self-esteem by giving them the opportunity to exhibit their skills and express themselves in class and thus, help these students improve their self-esteem.
 5. All parents might be given trainings on such topics as, child psychology, adolescence, protecting mental health, and personality development in order for them to develop healthy relations with their children, help them contribute to their children's personality developments and especially, support their children to remain in a healthy mental mood during adolescence. The Ministry of National Education, municipalities, public training centers and NGOs might offer these trainings in the form of informative seminars.
 6. School counselors and managers might inform parents about seminars, plays, movies and similar activities on parental attitudes and self-esteem via SMS or e-mail.
 7. Researchers might administer a similar study on primary school and high school students.
 8. In order to be able to generalize the finding of this study, a similar study might be administered in a different geographical region on a larger universe and sample.
 9. It is also recommended that researchers conduct a similar study using qualitative research methods, as this will enable a comparison of qualitative and quantitative results and an exploration of culture-specific differences.

NOTE

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