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## Parental attitude perception in adolescents by gender

Guliz Kolburan\*, Itir Tari Comert<sup>a</sup>, Meltem Narter<sup>a</sup>, Hakan Isozen<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Department of Psychology, Faculty of Science and Letters, Istanbul Aydın University, Turkey*

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### Abstract

Together with the family structure and dynamics, the attitudes exhibited towards the child plays a large part in the child's personality development. The sample of the study conducted to investigate the adolescents' perception of parental attitudes by gender and age variables is composed of 180 students between 15-25 year-of-age attending high schools and universities in Istanbul in the academic year of 2010-2011. The "Parental Attitudes Scale" developed by Kuzgun and Eldeleklioğlu has been used in the research. According to the research results; the males perceive their mothers as more authoritarian and protective, while the females perceive their fathers as more democratic and protective compared to males. Together with the increasing age, the adolescents perceive their mothers as more democratic, and fathers as more authoritarian. The results acquired in the study will be used within the scope of the project called "Constructive Communication with Adolescents – Parent Training Model".

*Keywords: Parental Attitude, Adolescents, Age.*

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### 1. Introduction

Numerous factors affect the development of the individuals' self worth. The feedbacks, reinforcements, and various learning lives shape the individual's self worth. Therefore, the attitudes adopted largely by the parents towards their children are important (Sezer, Oğuz; 2010).

While the child struggles to accommodate him/herself with the physical and social environment surrounding him/her since birth, s/he receives the biggest support from his/her parents. Especially the parents are the identification models that play a fundamental role in formation of the child's personality. The attitudes adopted by the parents while growing their children play an important role in shaping the children's early lives and the development of their selfhood structure. The children shape their own sense of self according to their parents' interest and behaviors towards them, and develop a notion of selfhood. When their children encounter a problem, the parents generally adopt the conventional approaches adopted by their own parents. And since they do not have any opportunity to learn a better way, they repeat their parents' faults.

The most apparent two features of the parental attitudes are the "emotional relation dimension" and "control dimension". An examination of the emotional relation dimension indicates that this dimension varies in a spectrum ranging from a receptive attitude centered on the child to a rejectionist attitude. Likewise, the "control dimension" covers a broad area from the restrictive attitude to the tolerant attitude. According to the researches focused on the

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\* *Asst. Prof. Dr. Güliz KOLBURAN Tel.: 0212.4256151  
E-Posta: meltemnarter@aydin.edu.tr*

relations between the parental behaviors and the children's behaviors, the non-oppressive, flexible, and tolerant parents lead to positive emotional, social, and cognitive development of the children (Yavuzer, 2010).

Baumrind has made comprehensive researches on the parental attitudes. In this research, Baumrind has determined three types of parental attitudes: democratic, authoritarian, and protective (Baumrind; 1968). The most appropriate parental attitude for the children's personality development is the democratic parental attitude where the respect and love is provided unconditionally. The democratic parental attitude allows both controlling the children and meeting their needs. The behaviors of the parents adopting the democratic attitude are consistent with each other, determined, and reliable. In this attitude, the child is permitted to perform certain behaviors, thus creating an environment suitable for development of their sense of responsibility. The parents displaying this attitude accept that each child has his/her own unique development capacity, and permit the children to grow freely, display their skills, and realize themselves. Various researches indicate that the children who perceive their parents as democratic have higher self esteem and self confidence, they feel themselves less lonely, have lower social anxiety levels, and their self realization is influenced positively (Çelenk; 2003, Kuzgun, 1973; Leary, Kowalsky, 1995).

Another one of the widespread attitudes is the authoritarian attitude. It is known that the authoritarian attitude have negative effects on the individuals. In this attitude, the parents disregard their children's development levels, personality traits, and demands and expect them to act in the way the parents want. When the children do not act in the way their parents want, they are punished frequently. In the families raised in the families adopting this attitude cannot express their feelings like anger, rage as well as their thoughts. Such environments prevent the children's independent personality development, and increase especially the male children's aggression level while decreasing their self-esteem level. It is thought that the authoritarian parent attitude prevents the individual from realizing him/herself, causes fearful attachment, induces to suicide, leads to lack of hope, depressive mood, and negative self perception, it increases the smoking level as well as the social anxiety level (Çelenk, 2003; Haktanır et al., 1998; Keskin, Çam, 2008; Özen et al. 2007).

In the protective/demanding parental attitude that is the third attitude, the children are protected and controlled by their parents excessively. Since many things that can be made by the children are made by the parents, the children are prevented from learning by experience. By intervening in the children excessively, they are prevented from being self-sufficient and learning how to trust themselves (Ulusoy et al., 2005). Consequently, the dependent individuals who are unable to take any decision alone are raised (Navaro, 1989; Dökmen, 1996; Kulaksızoğlu, 1998, Çağdaş, Seçer, 2004).

The most apparent two features of the parental attitudes are the "emotional relation dimension" and "control dimension". An examination of the emotional relation dimension indicates that this dimension varies in a spectrum ranging from a receptive attitude centered on the child to a rejectionist attitude. Likewise, the "control dimension" covers a broad area from the restrictive attitude to the tolerant attitude. According to the researches focused on the relations between the parental behaviors and the children's behaviors, the non-oppressive, flexible, and tolerant parents lead to positive emotional, social, and cognitive development of the children (Yavuzer, 2010).

## **2. Material Method**

Each behavior observed by the child within the family, constitutes the basis of the behavior model s/he will display in his/her future life. Together with the family structure and dynamics, the attitudes exhibited towards the child plays a large part in the child's personality development. The parental attitudes play an important role in the child's life in terms of constituting a role model for the child. The child identifies him/herself with his/her parents in his/her upbringing period, and starts to create the fundamentals of his/her personality. The child who identifies him/herself with the parental attitudes starts to display the same attitudes with his parents and this influences his/her whole life. The healthy attitudes the parents adopt towards their children is one of the most important factors enabling the child to be at peace with him/herself. The contrary situation leads to an increase in the number of the individuals who are not at peace with themselves and constitute a problem for the society.

In the light of this information, the purpose of our study is to investigate the adolescents' perception of parental attitudes by the variables such as gender and age. In the research, the Parental Attitude Inventory developed by Kuzgun and Eldeklioğlu (Kuzgun, 2005; Kuzgun, 1972; Eldeklioğlu, 1996) has been used to determine the parental attitudes. The inventory has three main sub-dimensions such as Democratic Parental Attitude, Authoritarian Parental Attitude, and Protective-Demanding Parental Attitude. In practice, it has been requested that the answers to be given

to articles are graded in a 5-step Likert type scale. The Parental Attitudes Scale developed by Kuzgun and Eldeleklioğlu in 2005 (Kuzgun, Eldeleklioğlu, 2005) determines the perceived parental attitudes by 40 articles: Democratic (15 articles), Protective/Demanding (15 articles) and Authoritarian (10 articles). It is a Likert type scale, and each article receives a point between 1 and 5. The points of the Democratic, Protective/Demanding and Authoritarian attitudes are calculated separately.

### 3. Findings

The sample group that has participated in the research is composed of 180 students. Of the group, 49.4% (n:89) is girls and 50.6% (n:91) is boys. Their birth years vary between 1983 and 1997. Of the group, 29.4% (n:53) was born in 1995, 16.1% (n:29) in 1991 and 12.8% (n:23) in 1990. The cluster is between those who were born in 1988-1991 with 45% (n:81). When we look at the birth places of the sample group, we see that 44.4% (n:80) were born in Istanbul.

Table 1: Perception of maternal attitudes by gender

MOTHER	Democratic attitude *		Protective attitude **		Authoritarian attitude ***	
	Does Have	Not Have	Does Have	Not Have	Does Have	Not Have
Girl	46.5% (n:38)	52% (n:39)	51.1% (n:48)	45.6% (n:36)	46.3% (n:38)	50% (n:45)
Boy	53.5% (n:53)	48% (n:36)	48.9% (n:46)	54.4% (n:43)	53.7% (n:44)	50% (n:45)

$$*\chi^2 = 0,523, df=1, p= 0,469$$

$$**\chi^2 = 0,519, df=1, p= 0,471$$

$$***\chi^2 = 0,230, df=1, p= 0,632$$

When we look at the perception of maternal attitudes by gender, there is no statistical difference between the genders in terms of perception of the attitudes. It is seen that the male adolescents perceive their mothers as more democratic compared to female adolescents, while the female adolescents perceive their mothers as more protective compared to male adolescents and the male adolescents perceive their mothers as more authoritarian compared to the female adolescents.

Table 2: Perception of paternal attitudes by gender

FATHER	Democratic attitude *		Protective attitude **		Authoritarian attitude***	
	Does Have	Not Have	Does Have	Not Have	Does Have	Not Have
Girl	59.5% (n:66)	42% (n:29)	57.4% (n:66)	44.6% (n:29)	54.7% (n:58)	50% (n:37)
Boy	40.5% (n:45)	58% (n:40)	42.6% (n:49)	55.4% (n:36)	45.3% (n:48)	50% (n:37)

$$*\chi^2 = 5,187, df=1, p= 0,023$$

$$**\chi^2 = 2,720, df=1, p= 0,099$$

$$***\chi^2 = 0,389, df=1, p= 0,533$$

When we look at the perception of paternal attitudes by gender, there is no statistical difference between the genders in terms of perception of the authoritarian attitude. However, there is **significance** from the view point of democratic and authoritarian attitudes. It is observed that the female adolescents perceive their fathers more protective (57.4%) compared to male adolescents, while the male adolescents perceive their fathers less democratic compared to the female adolescents

When the internal parental attitude perceptions of the girls and boys are examined, no significant difference has been found between the parental attitude perceptions of 89 female and 91 male adolescents. Besides, it has been seen that 69.5% (n:66) of the girls perceive the paternal attitudes as more democratic. Of the male adolescents, 52.9% (n:45) perceive their fathers' attitudes as more democratic. And 69.5% (n:66) of the female adolescents perceive their fathers' attitudes as more protective compared to the male adolescents.

Table 3: Perception of maternal attitudes by birth date

MOTHER	Democratic attitude		Protective attitude		Authoritarian attitude	
	Does Have	Not Have	Does Have	Not Have	Does Have	Not Have
1983	1% (n:1)	0 (n:0)	1.1% (n:1)	0 (n:0)	1.2% (n:1)	0 (n:0)
1986	3% (n:3)	1.3% (n:1)	3.2% (n:3)	1.3% (n:1)	1.2% (n:1)	3.3% (n:3)

1987	5.1% (n:5)	5.3% (n:4)	8.5% (n:8)	1.3% (n:1)	9.8% (n:8)	1.1% (n:1)
1988	7.1% (n:7)	5.3% (n:4)	7.4% (n:7)	5.1% (n:4)	6.1% (n:5)	6.7% (n:6)
1989	6.1% (n:6)	14.7% (n:11)	8.5% (n:8)	11.4% (n:9)	9.8% (n:8)	10% (n:9)
1990	15.2% (n:15)	10.7% (n:8)	18.1% (n:18)	7.6% (n:6)	13.4% (n:11)	12.2% (n:11)
1991	18.2% (n:18)	13.3% (n:10)	9.6% (n:9)	22.8% (n:18)	12.2% (n:10)	18.9% (n:17)
1992	1% (n:1)	4% (n:3)	3.2% (n:3)	1.3% (n:1)	3.7% (n:3)	1.1% (n:1)
1993	0 (n:0)	5.3% (n:4)	1.1% (n:1)	2.5% (n:2)	3.7% (n:3)	0 (n:0)
1994	2% (n:2)	10.7% (n:8)	6.4% (n:6)	5.1% (n:4)	7.3% (n:6)	4.4% (n:4)
1995	32.3% (n:32)	24% (n:18)	24.5% (n:23)	35.4% (n:28)	23.2% (n:19)	34.4% (n:31)
1996	4% (n:4)	1.3% (n:1)	4.3% (n:4)	1.3% (n:1)	6.1% (n:5)	1.1% (n:1)
1997	5.1% (n:5)	4% (n:3)	4.3% (n:4)	5.1(n:4)	2.4% (n:2)	6.7% (n:6)

When we look at the perception of the maternal attitudes by birthdates, no statistical relation between them is observed.

Table 4: Perception of paternal attitudes by birth date

FATHER	Democratic attitude		Protective attitude		Authoritarian attitude	
	Does Have	Not Have	Does Have	Not Have	Does Have	Not Have
1983	0.9% (n:1)	0 (n:0)	0.9% (n:1)	0 (n:0)	0.9% (n:1)	0 (n:0)
1986	2.7% (n:3)	1.4% (n:1)	1.7% (n:2)	3.1% (n:2)	2.8% (n:3)	1.4% (n:1)
1987	3.6% (n:4)	1.4% (n:1)	4.3% (n:5)	0 (n:0)	4.7% (n:5)	0 (n:0)
1988	4.5% (n:5)	18.8% (n:13)	13% (n:15)	4.6% (n:3)	14.2% (n:15)	4.1% (n:3)
1989	1.8% (n:2)	14.5% (n:10)	7.8% (n:9)	4.6% (n:3)	8.5% (n:9)	4.1% (n:3)
1990	6.3% (n:7)	8.7% (n:6)	11.3% (n:13)	6.2% (n:4)	7.5% (n:8)	6.8% (n:5)
1991	18.9% (n:21)	7.2% (n:5)	7.8% (n:9)	20% (n:13)	11.3% (n:12)	18.9% (n:14)
1992	5.4% (n:6)	4.3% (n:3)	7.8% (n:9)	0 (n:0)	5.7% (n:6)	4.1% (n:3)
1993	0.9% (n:1)	0 (n:0)	0.9% (n:1)	0 (n:0)	0.9% (n:1)	0 (n:0)
1994	2.7% (n:3)	5.8% (n:49)	4.3% (n:5)	3.1% (n:2)	4.7% (n:5)	2.7% (n:2)
1995	45.9% (n:51)	30.4% (n:21)	32.2% (n:37)	53.8% (n:35)	32.3% (n:33)	52.7% (n:39)
1996	3.6% (n:4)	0 (n:0)	3.5% (n:4)	0 (n:0)	2.8% (n:3)	1.4% (n:1)
1997	2.7% (n:3)	7.2% (n:5)	4.3% (n:5)	4.6% (n:3)	4.7% (n:5)	4.1% (n:3)

When we look at the perception of the paternal attitudes by birth date, it has been found out that the adolescents perceive their fathers’ paternal attitudes as democratic as the adolescents’ ages increase ( $\chi^2 = 33,795$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = 0,001$ ). There is no statistical relation between the birth dates and perception of the fathers’ attitudes as protective or authoritarian.

#### 4. Discussion

In line with the research findings, it is seen that the parental attitudes are different between the male and female university students. Duru studied the relation between the self-esteem and the parental attitudes in the year 1995 year. In the research, it has been seen that the students whose self-esteem is high perceive democratic parental attitudes. A relation has been seen between the self-esteem and the perceived parental attitudes (Duru, 1995). Although the self-esteem is not investigated in this research, it is thought that the self-esteem of the adolescents grown with a democratic attitude will increase.

Deniz and Güvenç examined the family perception, self-esteem perception in the adolescents from the viewpoint of education type and gender variables in a research they made in the year 1996 on 200 high school students. At the end of the research, they have discovered that the male students perceive their families more positively compared to the female students, and solve their conflicts more positively and stress-freely. The boys have stated, compared to the girls, that everyone in the family understands each other better (Deniz, Güvenç, 1996). In our research, too, the male adolescents perceive their mothers as more democratic compared to female adolescents. From this point of view, the research findings have similarities.

In our research, it is seen that the female students perceive their fathers as more democratic compared to the male students, while the male students perceive their fathers as more protective and authoritarian compared to the female students. In the research conducted by Burt et al. in the year 1988, the parental attitudes are perceived as more democratic by the female university students, while the male students perceive them as more protective and authoritarian. This is supported by the finding that the girls are influenced by the parental attitudes more. However, the research conducted by Gecas and Schwable in the year 1986, overlaps the finding that the males are influenced

by the parental attitudes more. This can be commented as that the female university students in the sample group want less autonomy compared to the males (Burt et al., 1988; Gecas, Schwable, 1986).

When the researches made on this issue are reviewed, the relation between the ways the attitudes are perceived and the ages of the adolescents is disregarded. Therefore, the findings of our research gain importance. It has been found out in our study that as the ages of the adolescents increase they perceive the paternal attitudes as more authoritarian. This can be explained with the increasing demand for autonomy together with the increasing age.

## 5. Conclusion And Suggestions

Due to the low educational level of our society, the insufficiency of reading habit, the lack of sensitivity to the subject by the mass media, etc. the parents apply mostly the conventional and hearsay things while raising their children. However, in the childhood and adolescence periods in which both the growth is very rapid and the environmental stimulants increase and change continuously, the type of the relation between the parents and their children gains importance. The systematic studies that enable the parents to realize the development needs of their children and establish correct relation with the children are necessary. In the countries where the importance of education is understood very well, it is seen that the parent-oriented studies about child development and education have been started long ago (in the 1960s) (Çağdaş, Seçer, 2004). In recent year, the importance of the subject has been acknowledged in our country as well, and the parent training programs have been organized by various voluntary agencies, mainly Mother-Child Education Foundation, and universities with the intention that the parents can raise healthier children in all respects. It has been seen that the parents in all segments of the society need information on the child development and education, and that various training programs have caused positive change in the parent-child communication, though limitedly (Şahin, Kalburan, 2009).

In line with the results acquired, it is possible to make the following suggestions: Parents in the family and the teachers at the school must create the environments that will allow the children to know themselves, reveal their strengths and develop their vulnerabilities without making any gender discrimination. At the schools at each level of education, the counselor must meet the parents more frequently to organize “parent training programs” about the development needs of the children and to increase their sensitivity to establishing effective relation with them. At the preschool education institutes, the parent-oriented training programs on the parental attitudes can be created by the teachers, thus enabling the parents to develop a positive attitude towards their children. The preschool teachers can make systematic studies supporting the self worth of the children within the scope of the educational program starting from the early childhood. The counselors can give the parents effective communication skills training at certain intervals with the guidance works they carry out at the schools. The findings acquired from the research can constitute the basis of the psychological consultancy works in the higher education and the family-oriented services in the guidance. Besides, starting from the finding that the democratic parental attitude increases the self-esteem, family communication training can be given and family consultancy can be provided.

In the light of these results, it is possible to make the following suggestions:

1. It is necessary to communicate with the parents about the educational approaches of the school, and the in-class educational activities applied to the student; besides, parent training programs must be organized to provide school-family mutual help and effective cooperation about the child's education.
2. Within the framework of the abovementioned parent training programs, the parents must be informed about the students' conformity, development problems, interests, needs, and talents.

The parent training program to be planned in the study to be planned in the light of these data will include the acquired data, and the study will be conducted accordingly.

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