

Perceived Parenting Styles and Rejection Sensitivity in University Students

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Abstract

The aim of present study to investigate the relationship between perceived parenting styles and rejection sensitivity in university students. The group of study was 360 university students (180 males, 180 females) at the Sakarya University. Personal Information Form, Perceived Parenting Styles Form and Rejection Sensitivity Scale were used for study. Independent samples T test was used to determine differences between variables and sub-dimensions and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to evaluate the relationships of variables. According to findings, there is an important relationship between perceived parenting styles and rejection sensitivity. Authoritarian parents' children have higher rejection sensitivity than other children. Democratic parents' children have less rejection sensitivity than other children. Finally, perceived parenting styles have big effect on their children' rejection sensitivity.

Keywords: Parenting styles, rejection, rejection sensitivity

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Individuals sustain their life and meet their needs through the relationships they have. As a consequence, the key point in the interpersonal relations is “need”. Senses of love and belonging are two basic needs for human. In order to be healthy from psychological aspect and self-actualize, a person needs love, belonging and acceptance (Sarıçam, 2011). Acceptance is a sense of gaining approval for our identity and thoughts. Acceptance is to get verbal or nonverbal messages in the way of “I accept your individuality and differentness. It is right to be yourself. I do not suppose you to think, feel and see like me.” (Savage, 2000).

Acceptance means that parents need to be respectful for physical and emotional freedom of their children and for difference between their needs and the children needs. Accepted children learn to trust by developing a realistic personality and to feel in safe. Developing the capacity to love and to be loved, children learn to cope with disappointments and they learn to share the emotions with others by experiencing them. They become aware of accepting themselves by feeling that they are accepted. Accepting himself leads to self-esteem, self-belief, self-respect and self-sufficiency. (Savage, 2006).

Acceptance has several positive effects on individual and rejection, as opposite situation, has several offending effects on individual. Hurting effect of rejection is learnt in early ages (Sarıçam, 2011). It is a fact that individuals who were exposed to wrong behaviors by their parents in childhood years may develop rejection expectation and rejection sensitivity in their future life.

According to Bowlby, children develop their mental models and occurrences affecting their future relations on their own. Bowlby defines that when needs of children are answered by rejection by their parents, children become sensitive to rejection. In other words, when they look for support, they create expectation of rejection and they learn to form a high value to avoid from this kind of rejection. Therefore, they experience expectation of anxiety when they express their needs and hurts to other important people. The anxious rejection expectation makes them extremely cautious for rejection cues. (Quoted in Erözkan, 2007)

According to Rohner, the parents are “rejecting” to their children in four different ways: (1) Parents do not show enough love, fondness and affection (2) Parents behave aggressively and feel hostility (3) Parents neglect their children (4) Although there is no apparent neglecting, a child believe that his parents do not love him (“undifferentiated rejecting”). “Undifferentiated rejection” refers to individuals’ belief that their parents neglect them or they do not love them, even though there is not a clear behavioral indication showing that parents are neglecting their children or they are unaffectionate towards them. Parents may develop some feelings towards their children like affectionate (or cold and unaffectionate) or

hostile, aggressive, intolerant, anxious or opposite feelings. In the same way, parents may be indifferent and neglecting. Some children have never experienced feelings and behaviors related to parents love. Instead, they have just seen the cold expressions of hostility and aggressiveness, indifference and neglecting or undifferentiated rejection (Önder & Gülay, 2007).

In accordance with the current study, it is thought that there is a close relation between rejection sensitivity and parent behaviors. In this study, we will evaluate parents' behaviors in 5 main headings although they are named differently by many researchers: Neglecting, authoritative, democratic, protective and rejecting behaviors of parents. Neglecting parents accept wishes of children without limitation and control. The sustenance of this attitude affects child's ability to control his desires and impulses negatively and causes to increase aggressive behaviors. (Bozaslan & Kaya, 2011).

Indifferent parents neglect their child and they even reject him psychologically. They are unaware of the child's needs and interests. They do not care what the child does or where he is and they try to keep him away from their life. Indifferent parents show a bit of love and control child's behavior in minimum level (Yörükoğlu, 1980). The only aim of the child who grew up with indifferent parents is to feel affection, draw attention and prove his existence. In forthcoming years, he will search in his social life for interest and love that he did not have in his family life. He will interpret a love message differently, and look for a shelter for his soul. As the child grows, the conflicts with the family will increase and he will seek ways for taking revenge. As he becomes older, he will be alienated from the family. When the parents need interest and care, he will not stand by for them. The main reason of this attitude is that interest and love are withheld by his parents when he actually needed them (Sezer, 2010; Bozaslan, & Kaya, 2011; MEB, 2012).

Authoritative parents try to shape their child as a small adult in certain patterns and with a specific goal. The parents have the whole control. They are generally inconsiderate, intolerant, strict and oppressive (Dodurgalı et al., 2011). The behaviors of the child are evaluated with strict norms and he does not have a right to make mistake. The child is supposed to obey the rules without questioning them; everything at home is bound to rules and hours. The parents always keep an eye on the child. They punish the simple mistakes of the child since they believe that the child does not obey the rules if he is not afraid of them. Parents have the sanction power. The parents do not swerve from their principles as they are always right. They do not struggle for understanding their child or being in the same level with him (Yavuzer, 1986; Keskin, & Çam, 2008; Bozaslan, & Kaya, 2011).

The education, offered by oppressive and authoritative parents, has a retributive approach. The punishment is given for the child not to do any mistakes and these are severe punishments for a child. The discipline applied by the parents harasses the child. The natural rights of the child are presented as an award of his being well-behaved. Expecting a success from the children grown up by this kind of parents is totally wrong. The child cannot express himself since he is trying to obey the rules of his parents. Within the limitations and the rules defined by the parents, the original characteristics of the child are ignored (Alisinanoğlu, 2003; Kesici, 2007).

The characteristics of the child grown up by authoritative parents are being stressful, anxious, silent and timid. They have low self-confidence and affected with others thoughts. Since they are criticized consistently, they feel inferiority complex. They are externally controlled; they cannot decide on their own and wait for instruction from outside. They can be aggressive as well. (Dodurgalı et al., 2011).

Democratic parents feel a deep and sincere love for their child and show this love in unconditional way. They are sensitive about the child's interests and needs. They watch the child's behaviors with a close interest and sympathy. They care the autonomous personality and healthy adaptation of the child. They encourage the child to take his own decisions for some topics; discuss the reasons of decisions for some important topics, value his ideas; allow verbal communication. They strive to be a guide for the child in almost all issues. This type of parents provides freedom in logical limitations for their child. (Kuzgun, 1991; Çeçen, 2008)

The child, growing up in a democratic and safe environment, becomes a respectful, creative, active, strong, outgoing, responsible, sober, tolerant and open-minded individual. He knows the limits, has productive relations, shows consideration for opposite ideas, defends his beliefs, expresses his thoughts freely and does not bound to authority blindly. Who does not want a child equipped with these features? (Şahin, 2007; Sezer, 2010). The most successful and the healthiest attitude of parents consists of being "safe", "accepting", "encouraging", "tolerant" and "democratic" (Dodurgalı et al., 2011). This flexible approach leads to develop healthy individuals in terms of physical, mental and psychological sides.

The excessive protection of parents refers to have over-monitoring and intensive care on the child. They bring up a spoiled child. They carry him all the time. They do what the child wants. As if the child is a king, every wish of him is fulfilled. This child is coddled by the parents. The family members struggle for him not to cry, sweat, not to be cold, be ill, be tired, be hurt or catch an infection. It is like growing the child in a bell jar (Yörükoğlu, 1980)

The children, grown up by overprotective parents with excessive love, cannot be prepared properly for social life. They can be doubtful, hurt and addicted to thoughts of other people. They seem shy, loser and clumsy. They are lack of the power of success and ability of being accepted. Their power is hidden. Mostly, they are unsuccessful and unhappy. Social life is a competition of power and fight. The child accepts the failure in the competition beforehand. The desire for competition is not even seen. It is so hard to be alienated from the family for the child (Yavuzer, 1986).

The parents who have rejecting attitude treat their children in hostile manner. They do not show love, sincerity and affection to their child unwittingly. They focus on the failures of the child and criticize horrendously. The actions of the child are never approved. They almost wait for opportunity to make pressure on the child. Rather than positive sides of the child, they concentrate on the negative aspects of him. They treat their child as if he was a foster child. Sometimes only mother or father has rejecting attitudes toward the child. Frequently, child is exposed to cold and critical attitudes. (Yılmaz, 2000; Dodurgalı et al., 2011)

It is inappropriate to expect positive behaviors from the children grown up by these types of parents due to the fact that rejecting prevents the child from meeting his physical and psychological needs (Kapçı, & Küçüker, 2006). The parents never show their love to the child, never understand him; they try to direct him through rules, strict attitudes and orders. These behaviors are not acceptable whatever the reasons of them are. The parents need to tackle this problem with professional help if necessary. On the contrary, these types of children will face bigger problems in society in the future. (Yavuzer, 1986; Cüceloğlu, 1993). The children, grown up with a rejecting attitude, become anxious, doubtful, unstable and they are tend to commit a crime. They have no good relationship with people; they have difficulty in making a friend. They can be aggressive and they do not show respect to human rights (Dodurgalı et al., 2011). The purpose of the current study is to examine the relation between different parent attitudes perceived by university students and students' rejection sensitivity.

Method

Study Group

The study group of the research is composed of randomly chosen 360 university students (180 female-180 male) who study at different faculties of Sakarya University. The average age of the students is 21.3. All students' parents are alive and live together.

Instruments

Personal Information Form: Information includes demographic variables. It is prepared regarding literature.

Rejection Sensitivity Scale: It is an eighteen-item scale developed by Downey and Feldman (1996) to define the level of individual rejection sensitivity and adapted to Turkish by Erözkan (2004). Worries and concerns, related to the result of the situation defined in the scale, are ranked with points order of (1) it never worries and (6) it highly worries. As a person gets less point, his rejection sensitivity becomes less at that point. If the scale point of the person is high, the rejection sensitivity becomes high as well. Factor load of 17 items is bigger than 40 and the factor load of all items is bigger than 30. Rejection Sensitivity Scale has a high internal consistency (Cronbach alfa = .81). Cronbach alfa internal consistency reliability coefficient is calculated as .80 for the current study.

Parents Attitudes Form: Most of parent scales are two or three dimensional. To gain 5 parents attitudes, 2 parent attitude scales are used together in the current study.

a) *Parent Attitude Scale:* The scale, developed by Kuzgun and Eldeleklioglu (2005), is used with the aim of measuring the parent attitudes for teenagers and adults. It is composed of three sub-scales. It has totally 40 items, including 15 items testing democratic attitudes, 15 items testing Protective-Insistent attitudes and 10 items testing authoritative attitudes. The response options of the scale are “Definitely not”, “Probably not”, “Yes, probably”, “Yes, definitely” and “Totally right”. Participants are asked to answer the expressions in the items by thinking of their parent. The answered items are evaluated as 1 point for “Definitely not”, 2 points for “Probably not”, 3 points for “Yes, probably”, 4 points for “Yes, definitely” and 5 points for “Totally right”. To define the reliability of parent attitude scale, firstly internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach Alfa) of subscales forming the scale are calculated. Then, it is defined whether the scale has stable measure or not through test-retest method. Stability factors and internal consistency coefficients of Parent Attitude Scale: It is defined that internal consistency coefficient is .89 and stability factor is .92 for democratic attitude; internal consistency coefficient is .82 and stability factor is .75 for Protective/Insistent attitude; internal consistency coefficient is .78 and stability factor is .79 for authoritative attitude (Kuzgun and Eldeleklioglu, 2005).

b) *PBI; The Parental Bonding Instrument:* The instrument developed by Parker and his friends (1979) and adapted to Turkish by Küçüker and Kapçı (2006) evaluates the relationship with parents in terms of individual’s perception retrospectively. The scale basically includes interest, control/excessive protection and rejection factors. The scale,

composed of 25 items, has 12 items in interest aspect (points change between 0-36). While high points reflect the parents perceived as sincere, considerate and accepting, low points reflect the parent perceived as cold and rejecting. 13 items are in control/excessive protection aspect (points change between 0-39). High points refer to parent perceived as over protective or parent who do not allow autonomy. Participant is asked to define with four rating system (Yes, definitely=3...Definitely not=0) how the each expression reflects the attitudes of his parent towards him by thinking of first 16 years of his life. The reliability of the scale is evaluated through a few stages. Test-retest reliability is .76 for interest and .63 for excessive protection/control. Split-half reliability is calculated as .88 and .74 respectively. Reliability coefficient among observers is found as .85 and .69.

Procedure

At first, data collection tools were distributed to the students and they were informed about the importance of the research. Then a presentation which was about parent attitudes and lasted 20 minutes was given. 2 scales related to parent attitudes were provided. Surveys and forms were answered by students and collected 15 minutes later. Gathered data was processed in SPSS 17 packaged software. After adding the gained points from two scales, the highest parent attitude was evaluated as parent attitude perceived by the related student. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare variation between the groups.

Findings

The rejection sensitivity levels of students in terms of perceived mother attitudes

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to define whether there is a difference between the university students' rejection sensitivity levels in terms of parent attitudes they perceive. The arithmetic average and standard deviation values are shown in Table 1 and results of variance analysis are indicated in Table 2.

Table 1: The arithmetic average and standard deviation values related to rejection sensitivity level of students in terms of perceived mother attitudes

	Perceived mother attitude	N	\bar{X}	Std. Deviation
Rejection sensitivity	Indifferent	45	58,55	20,53
	Authoritative	89	52,77	13,99
	Democratic	120	47,52	16,41
	Protective	42	51,44	15,20
	Rejecting	64	68,88	15,33

Among university students, 45 students perceive their mothers as indifferent, 89 students perceive their mothers as authoritative, 120 students perceive their mothers as

democratic, 42 students perceive their mothers as protective and 64 students perceive their mothers as rejecting.

Table 2: ANOVA results for rejection sensitivity levels of students in terms of perceived mother attitudes

		Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	p
Rejection sensitivity	Between Groups	8910,10	4	2227,52	28,41	,00
	Within Groups	88924,25	356			
	Total	99640,61	360	79,71		

* $p < 0,05$

As the data in Table 2 are examined, F value for rejection sensitivity levels of students is found meaningful in the $p < .05$ significance level as a result of one-way analysis of variance applied to define whether there is a difference between the rejection sensitivity levels of students in terms of perceived mother attitude. The findings show that the difference between the rejection sensitivity levels of students in terms of perceived mother attitudes is meaningful statistically. LSD Post Hoc test is applied to figure out from which attitudes of students this difference stems (Table 3)

Table 3: LSD Post Hoc Test related to mother attitudes perceived by students

Variable	(I) Per.mother attitude	(J) Per.mother attitude	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig
Rejection sensitivity	Indifferent	Authoritative	5,78149(*)	,04
		Democratic	11,02381(*)	,00
		Protective	7,10590(*)	,00
		Rejecting	-10,32738(*)	,00
	Authoritative	Indifferent	-5,78149(*)	,04
		Democratic	5,24232(*)	,00
		Protective	1,32441	,40
		Rejecting	-16,10887(*)	,00
	Democratic	Indifferent	-11,02381(*)	,00
		Authoritative	-5,24232(*)	,00
		Protective	-3,91791(*)	,00
		Rejecting	-21,35119(*)	,00
	Protective	Indifferent	-7,10590(*)	,00
		Authoritative	-1,32441	,40
		Democratic	3,91791(*)	,00
		Rejecting	-17,43328(*)	,00
Rejecting	Indifferent	10,32738(*)	,00	
	Authoritative	16,10887(*)	,00	
	Democratic	21,35119(*)	,00	
	Protective	17,43328(*)	,00	

* $p < 0,05$

As it is seen in Table 3, the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their mothers as indifferent is higher than the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their mothers as

authoritative, democratic and protective. The rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their mothers as authoritative is higher than the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their mothers as democratic. The rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their mothers as protective is lower than the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their mothers as rejecting. The rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their mothers as rejecting is higher than the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their mothers as indifferent, authoritative, democratic and protective. These findings show that the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their mothers as democratic is the lowest and the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their mothers as rejecting is the highest.

The rejection sensitivity levels of students in terms of perceived father attitudes

Table 4: The arithmetic average and standard deviation values related to rejection sensitivity level of students in terms of perceived father attitudes

Variable	Perceived father attitude	N	\bar{X}	Std. Deviation
Rejection sensitivity	Indifferent	35	50,79	17,70
	Authoritative	165	57,87	15,80
	Democratic	88	45,30	15,17
	Protective	24	51,50	14,90
	Rejecting	48	58,62	19,75

Among university students, 35 students perceive their fathers as indifferent, 165 students perceive their fathers as authoritative, 88 students perceive their fathers as democratic, 24 students perceive their fathers as protective and 48 students perceive their fathers as rejecting.

Table 5: ANOVA results for rejection sensitivity levels of students in terms of perceived father attitudes

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p
Rejection sensitivity	Between Groups	9442,21	4	2360,40	24,06	,00
	Within Groups	87782,09	356	79,15		
	Total	98316,70	360			

* $p < 0,05$

As the data in Table 5 are examined, F value for rejection sensitivity levels of students is found meaningful in the 24,06 $p < 0.05$ significance level as a result of one-way analysis of variance applied to define whether there is a difference between the rejection sensitivity levels of students in terms of perceived father attitude. The findings indicate that the difference between the rejection sensitivity levels of students in terms of perceived father attitudes is meaningful statistically. LSD Post Hoc test is applied to figure out from which students this difference comes (Table 6)

Table 6: LSD Post Hoc Test related to father attitudes perceived by students

Variable	(I) Per.father attitude	(J) Per.father attitude	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Rejection Sensitivity	Indifferent	Authoritative	-7,07760(*)	,00
		Democratic	5,48878(*)	,01
		Protective	-,71276	,74
		Rejecting	-7,82873(*)	,00
	Authoritative	Indifferent	7,07760(*)	,00
		Democratic	12,56638(*)	,00
		Protective	6,36484(*)	,00
		Rejecting	-,75112	,70
	Democratic	Indifferent	-5,48878(*)	,01
		Authoritative	-12,56638(*)	,00
		Protective	-6,20154(*)	,00
		Rejecting	-13,31750(*)	,00
	Protective	Indifferent	,71276	,74
		Authoritative	-6,36484(*)	,00
		Democratic	6,20154(*)	,00
		Rejecting	-7,11596(*)	,00
Rejecting	Indifferent	7,82873(*)	,00	
	Authoritative	,75112	,70	
	Democratic	13,31750(*)	,00	
	Protective	7,11596(*)	,00	

* p < 0,05

As it is apparent in Table 6, the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their fathers as indifferent is lower than the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their fathers as authoritative and rejecting; higher than the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their fathers as democratic. The rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their fathers as authoritative is higher than the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their fathers as democratic and protective. The rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their fathers as protective is lower than the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their fathers as rejecting. The rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their fathers as rejecting is higher than the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their fathers as indifferent, democratic and protective. These findings show that the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their fathers as democratic is the lowest and the rejection sensitivity of students who perceive their fathers as rejecting is the highest.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Research results indicate that parent attitudes have a big effect on the development of rejection sensitivity of children. Students who perceive the parents as having rejecting attitude have high rejection sensitivity. Especially, female students perceive their mothers and male students perceive their fathers as rejecting. It can be said that the situation stems from authority

fight in the family, wrong beliefs of parents about bringing up children and parents' giving importance of their own works. The reason for that the children of rejecting parents have higher rejection sensitivity levels than authoritative or other parent attitudes may be the fact that rejecting parents say no to wishes and needs of their child when there is not a reason. However, authoritative parents have obedience to the rules. If the interests, wishes and needs of the child are appropriate for the rules, they are accepted and the child is cared in a certain level. What happens when the children grow up without being accepted? They learn to reject and feel themselves worthless. When the personality of the child is lost, he feels himself more depersonalized. Self-confidence, self-esteem, respect and acceptance; all of them are lost. They start to feel that they have no control over their environment and they see the world as enemy and rejecting. They perceive the events from personal aspect and feel that they are the target for external powers (Savage, 2006).

As a society, we need to be aware that we cannot bring up children by forcing and directing them, intervening to their life, buying whatever they want or not showing our love (Yavuzer, 1986; Dökmen, 2012). The best way of raising a child is to be tolerant, democratic, equal in love and to use the rules in suitable way (Dodurgalı et al., 2011). Therefore, programs like AEP, (Family Education Program) developed on the basis of government, should be extended. The topics under the headings of effects of rejection on the children, the things required to do and not to need to be added. Parentage certificate programs should be conducted and those who cannot pass the exam are offered education process again since their parentage is disadvantageous.

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