

Investigating Perceived Paternal Attitudes of Children Aged between 9 and 17 Years

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Received: June 22, 2023; received in revised form: September 25, 2023;
accepted: September 26, 2023

Abstract:

Introduction: The study aims to investigate the perceived paternal attitudes of children aged between 9 and 17 years in relation to some variables such as child's gender, child's age, the number of siblings, father's working status, and father's level of education.

Methods: The study used a survey design. The sample group consisted of 424 children aged between 9 and 17 years, including 233 girls and 191 boys. The data were collected using the Child Raising Styles Scale developed by Sümer and Güngör (1999), and a General Information Form. The data were analyzed using SPSS software. An independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test whether there is a single significant difference in the dataset. The Scheffe test was used to determine the groups that caused the significant difference.

Results: The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$ in all statistical analyses. There was no significant difference in father's acceptance/attention in terms of child's gender and the number of siblings, while a significant difference was found in terms of child's age, father's working status, and father's level of education. There was no significant difference in children's perceived paternal attitudes according to child's gender, child's age, number of siblings, father's working status, and father's level of education in the supervision/control dimension. On the other hand, there was a significant difference according to child's age, child's gender, number of siblings, father's working status, and father's level of education in the acceptance/attention dimension.

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Discussion: Taken together, the research results showed that fathers' child-raising attitudes vary. Some results are consistent with earlier studies, and some are contrast to earlier studies. A possible explanation for this might be factors such as place, time, sample, changes in parental attitudes, and socio-cultural changes.

Limitations: The sample consisted of 424 children aged between 9 and 17 years including 233 girls and 191 boys.

Conclusions: Parents' attitudes and behaviours in raising their children are different. These differences may result from parents' expectations of their children, parents' enjoyment of the parenting role, the number of children, children's birth order, children's gender, children's personality traits, parents' personality traits, and the interaction that parents had with their parents in their childhood. These factors have an impact on parents' attitudes and behaviours and determine the form and quality of the relationship between the mother, father, and child.

Key words: adolescence, paternal attitude, child-raising styles, early childhood.

Introduction

The formation of personality is laid in early childhood and settles in adolescence. Personality is shaped by the interaction between individuals' inherited characteristics and their environment. Personality is defined as "a person's general and specific characteristics and how these characteristics guide that person's social approach" (San Bayhan & Artan, 2012). Humans are both biological and social beings. The personality development of children takes place in a social environment that includes blood ties, primarily parents and other family members, non-blood-related adults, and friends within the microsystem which constitutes their closest environment (Slavin, 2011). Family is one of the most important factors in the personality development of children. Given the power and influence of family, no microsystem context is as effective as the family, and the foundation of social qualities in children is laid in the family (Berk, 2015).

Children's first teachers are their parents (Barnová, Tamášová & Krásna, 2019; Erkan, 2015). The foundation of children's knowledge, skills, habits, and attitudes is laid by their parents through experiences at an early age. The basic values, attitudes, and behaviours of parents in raising children play a fundamental role in children's healthy social and emotional development. The father and the mother are the first role models for children. Children consciously and unknowingly try to imitate their parents (Oberuč & Zapletal, 2017). The attitudes and behaviours of parents concerning raising children shape the development and personality of children. From birth onwards, children socialize by interacting with their parents. Children's interactions with their parents form

the basis for their later relationship with the outside world (Gander & Gardiner, 2004; Kuzgun & Eldeleklioğlu, 2005). Because parents are important identification models for children, children imitate and model their parents (Yavuzer, 2017). The way the child interacts with their parents becomes a reference for their attitudes and behaviours towards other individuals in social environments (Bekir, Aral, & Aydın, 2018; Çağdaş, 2008; Kandır & Alpan, 2008; Kulaksızoğlu, 2011; Seven, 2010; Tüfekçi Akcan & Deniz, 2016). Parents' child-raising attitudes are passed on from one generation to the next. Parents' internalized child-raising attitudes are also laid by their parents. These attitudes can be transferred with the desired aspects as well as with the undesirable aspects (Santrock, 2012). The family is children's first social environment and is responsible for their care and development. The structure, functions, and differences in family structures have different effects on children. In a wholesome family, it is important for children that family members support each other. Parents should do their best to ensure that their children's development is at the highest level. In this regard, families also have social and emotional responsibilities for their children. Ensuring their socialization, spending quality time with their children, playing games, listening to their children, have a talk with their children are some of the important responsibilities.

The attitudes and behaviours of parents in raising children are various and different. These differences may result from parents' expectations of the child to be born, whether they enjoy the parenting role or not, the number of children, the child's birth order, the child's gender, the child's personality traits, the parents' personality traits, and the interaction that they had with their parents in their childhood. These factors have impacts on the attitudes and behaviours of parents and determine the shape and quality of the relationship between the mother, father, and children (Arı, Bayhan, & Artan, 1995; Savran & Kuşkin, 1995; Yavuzer, 2006). The quality of parent-child relations is vital to the healthy social and emotional development of children (Özgün, 2015).

Parents' attitudes and behaviours are mostly discussed under two basic dimensions: acceptance-rejection and control-autonomy. The acceptance-rejection dimension focuses on warm (accepting or approving) or hostile (rejecting or disapproving) parental behaviours. While the children of parents who have a warm relationship attitude towards their children tend to develop self-control and responsible personality, the children of parents who have a hostile attitude towards their children may tend to show more stubborn and aggressive behaviors (Gander & Gardiner, 2004; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Santrock, 2012; Yavuzer, 2017).

Children whose parents are not sensitive to their children, do not meet their needs on time or at all, do not show enough attention to their children, and have

an overly intrusive and rejecting attitude start to feel insecure (Crain, 2000). It is parents' responsibility to meet the essential needs of babies from birth to the time when they can meet their own needs. However, the main duty of being a parent is not limited to meeting the needs of the child for growth and development or using positive discipline methods. The duty of parents also includes providing conditions that help children to develop their capacity both in the family and outside the family. Under the conditions of age, while fulfilling these responsibilities, parents should take measures to ensure family integrity and support their children's education and adaptation. These roles of families are much more important in early childhood. The formation of the first sense of trust in children, their first attachment experience, and the sense that they are valued and respected by others is important in children's lives and affect their future.

Hearty and warm family relationships also positively affect children's physical and psychological health. If children grow up in an environment where they are loved or respected, they can express themselves comfortably, be self-confident, have high self-esteem, know and defend their rights, be sociable and open to different views and opinions (Gordon, 2014; Ünal, 2009). On the other hand, isolation and alienation from the family can be observed in children who grow up in an environment that is the opposite of this, and this can often cause children to have behavioural and developmental problems (Berk, 2015).

The second dimension, control-autonomy, focuses on the restrictive or permissive attitudes of parents towards children in enforcing the rules of behaviours. While parents' strict control attitude towards the child causes the child to display the desired behaviours, it also contributes to the child's dependence. Children of parents who show a permissive parenting attitude towards their children are assertive and gregarious, but they can be quite aggressive (Gander & Gardiner, 2004).

Effective parenting practices cover children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development, and internal perceptions and overt behaviors provide positive development, while negative or inadequate parenting practices prevent the child from developing healthily (Karraker & Coleman, 2005). The attitudes and behaviours of parents towards their children are also very effective in the formation of personality development such as being active-passive, compatible-incompatible, dependent-autonomous, and introverted-extraverted (Baldık, 2005; Özgüven, 2001). The family, which is the smallest and most important unit of society, provides an environment that shapes children's attitudes and behaviours in their future lives, starting from the day they are born. Parents take pains with their children for years and make an effort to do what is right for them. However, what parents know and do may not always be right for their children and may unintentionally harm them.

Parental attitudes are very important in determining the direction of social skills and socialization, which form the basis of the relationship which children will establish with the outside world from birth and later in life. For this reason, it is important to determine paternal attitudes perceived by children and to make early interventions. For this purpose, children's perceived paternal attitudes were analyzed and evaluated in relation to child's gender, child's age, the number of siblings, father's working status, and father's level of education.

1 Method

1.1 Research design

The study used a survey design, which is one of the quantitative research designs. Survey research aims to describe certain existing characteristics of a group or an existing situation as it is (Karasar, 2018; Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2018).

1.2 Sample

700 children aged between 9 and 17 years who were attending primary and secondary schools in the 2020-2021 academic year in Ankara were reached by random sampling through Google forms. 424 children filled out the form.

1.3 Data collection tools

A General Information Form prepared by the researchers and the Child Raising Styles Scale (CRSS) developed by Sümer and Güngör (1999) were used to determine the adolescent raising styles. The CRSS has 11 items to measure the acceptance/attention dimension and 11 items to measure the control dimension in determining paternal attitudes perceived by children. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .91 for the paternal acceptance/attention dimension and .90 for the paternal control dimension.

1.4 Data analysis

Statistical analyses were carried out using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23 program. The level of confidence was 95%. The mean and standard deviation (SD) values were used for descriptive statistics regarding the personal characteristics of the participants.

Before the analysis, the skewness and kurtosis values of the dataset were checked to test whether the data showed a normal distribution. It is accepted that the data show a normal distribution if skewness and kurtosis take values between -3 and +3 (Kalaycı, 2008, p. 209) or between -2 and +2 (George & Mallery, 2003). Accordingly, the data in this research were normally distributed.

An independent samples t-test was applied to test whether there was a significant difference according to the variables of child's gender and father's working status because the parametric test assumptions were realized. One-way ANOVA was used to determine whether there was a significant difference according to the variables of the number of siblings and father's level of education. In statistical calculations, the level of significance was set at as 0.05. The Scheffe test was used to determine the groups from which the difference arises.

2 Findings and discussion

This section presents findings and discussions on whether there is a significant difference in supervision/control and acceptance/attention sub-dimensions of children's perceived paternal attitudes according to the variables including child's gender, age, number of siblings, father's working status, father's level of education.

Table 1

T-test results regarding the comparison of children's perceived paternal attitudes according to the child's gender variable

	<i>n</i>	$\bar{X}$	S_x	<u>Standard Error of Mean</u>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>p</i>
Supervision/ Girl	233	30.37	6.52	0.42	0.35	422	.948
Control Boy	191	30.41	6.04	0.43			
Acceptance/ Girl	233	33.69	8.42	0.55	-0.49	422	.184
Attention Boy	191	34.73	7.34	0.53			

Looking at Table 1, it is seen that there is no significant difference ($t(424)=0.35$, $p \geq 0.05$) between boys ($\bar{X}=30.41$, $S_x=6.04$) and girls ($\bar{X}=30.37$, $S_x=6.52$) in terms of their perceived paternal attitudes in the supervision/control dimension. The same also applies to the acceptance/attention dimension. No significant difference ($t(424)=-0.49$, $p \geq 0.05$) was found between boys ($\bar{X}=34.73$, $S_x=6.72$) and girls ($\bar{X}=33.69$, $S=8.42$) in terms of their perceived paternal attitudes in the acceptance/attention dimension.

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Table 2

Descriptive statistics regarding children's perceived paternal attitudes according to the child's age variable

		<u>n</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Sd</u>
Supervision/ Control	Age 9-10	55	31.92	6.47
	Age 11-12	67	31.11	6.53
	Age 13-14	110	30.17	6.74
	Age 15 and over	192	29.82	5.86
	Total	424	30.39	6.30
Acceptance/ Attention	Age 9-10	55	38.96	9.07
	Age 11-12	67	34.31	7.37
	Age 13-14	110	34.49	7.81
	Age 15 and over	192	32.55	7.36
	Total	424	34.16	7.96

As seen in Table 2, children aged between 9 and 10 years achieved the highest mean score ($\bar{X}$ =31.92) in the supervision/control dimension, while children aged 15 and over received the lowest mean score ($\bar{X}$ =29.82). Looking at the acceptance/attention dimension, children aged between 9 and 10 years had the highest mean score ($\bar{X}$ =38.96), while children aged 15 and over had the lowest mean score ($\bar{X}$ =32.55).

Table 3

One-way ANOVA results regarding children's perceived paternal attitudes according to the child's age variable

<u>ANOVA Results</u>						
	<u>Variance Source</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>Sd</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>
Supervision/ Control	Between groups	232.558	3	77.519	1.962	.119
	Within groups	16598.451	420	39.520		
	Total	16831.009	423			
Acceptance/ Attention	Between groups	1779.128	3	593.043	9.943	.000
	Within groups	25051.315	420	153.858		
	Total	26830.443	423			

As seen in Table 3, there was no significant difference ($F(3-420)=1.962$, $p>.05$) between children's arithmetic mean scores of perceived paternal attitudes in the supervision/control dimension in relation to the age variable. However, there was a significant difference ($F(3-420)=9.943$, $p<.05$.) between their arithmetic mean scores in the acceptance/attention dimension. This significant difference resulted from the fact that the mean scores of children ($\bar{X} = 38.96$) aged between 9 and 10 years were higher than the mean scores of children ($\bar{X}$ =31.11) aged between 11

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and 12 years, the mean scores of children ($\bar{X}$ =30.17) aged between 13 and 14 years, and the mean scores of children ($\bar{X}$ =29.82) aged 15 years and over.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics regarding children's perceived paternal attitudes according to the number of siblings variable

		<u>n</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Sd</u>
Supervision/ Control	One child	59	30.77	7.54
	Two children	130	30.72	6.23
	Three children	109	30.09	6.27
	Four children or more	126	30.12	5.80
	<i>Total</i>	424	30.39	6.30
Acceptance/ Attention	One child	59	35.47	8.47
	Two children	130	34.68	8.17
	Three children	109	34.12	7.93
	Four children or more	126	33.04	7.45
	<i>Total</i>	424	34.16	7.96

Looking at Table 4, it is seen that children without a sibling achieved the highest mean score ($\bar{X}$ =30.77) in the supervision/control dimension, while children with three siblings had the lowest mean score ($\bar{X}$ =30.09). While children without a sibling received the highest mean score ($\bar{X}$ =35.47) in the acceptance/attention dimension, children with four siblings had the lowest mean score ($\bar{X}$ =33.04).

Table 5

One-way ANOVA results regarding children's perceived paternal attitudes according to the number of siblings variable

<u>ANOVA Results</u>						
	<u>Variance Source</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>Sd</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>
Supervision/ Control	Between groups	41.792	3	13.931	.348	.790
	Within groups	16789.217	420	39.974		
	<i>Total</i>	16831.009	423			
Acceptance/ Attention	Between groups	293.746	3	97.915	1.550	.201
	Within groups	26536.697	420	63.183		
	<i>Total</i>	26830.443	423			

As seen in Table 5, there was a significant difference ($F(3-420)=1.550$; $p<.05$) between children's arithmetic mean scores of perceived paternal attitudes in the acceptance/attention dimension in relation to the number of siblings, while there was no significant difference ($F(3-420)=1.550$; $p<.05$) in the supervision/control dimension.

Table 6

T-test results regarding the comparison of children's perceived paternal attitudes according to the father's working status variable

		<u>n</u>	<u>$\bar{X}$</u>	<u>S_x</u>	<u>Standard Error of Mean</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>Sd</u>	<u>P</u>
Supervision/ Control	Not working	121	29.93	5.88	0.53	-.944	422	.346
	Working	303	30.57	6.47	0.37			
Acceptance/ Attention	Not working	121	32.90	8.08	0.73	.983	422	.039
	Working	303	34.67	7.87	0.45			

As seen in Table 6, there was no significant difference ($t(424)=-.944$, $p \geq 0.05$) between children whose fathers were not working ($\bar{X}=29.93$, $S_x=5.88$) and children whose fathers were working ($\bar{X}=30.57$, $S_x=6.47$) in terms of their mean scores in the supervision/control dimension. On the other hand, children whose fathers were working had a significantly ($t(424)=-.983$, $p \leq 0.05$) higher mean score ($\bar{X}=34.67$, $S_x=7.87$) in the acceptance/attention dimension compared to children whose fathers were not working ($\bar{X}=32.90$, $S_x=8.08$).

Table 7

Descriptive statistics regarding children's perceived paternal attitudes according to the father's level of education variable

		<u>n</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>ss</u>
Supervision/ Control	Primary school	165	29.53	6.26
	Secondary school	80	30.66	5.96
	High school	92	30.47	6.33
	University	87	31.66	6.51
	<i>Total</i>	424	30.39	6.30
Acceptance/ Attention	Primary school	165	32.87	7.52
	Secondary school	80	33.00	7.82
	High school	92	34.14	7.93
	University	87	37.71	8.00
	<i>Total</i>	424	34.16	7.96

Looking at Table 7, children whose fathers were university graduates achieved the highest mean score ($\bar{X}=31.66$) in the control/supervision dimension, and children whose fathers were primary school graduates had the lowest score mean score ($\bar{X}=29.53$). Similarly, children whose fathers were university graduates achieved the highest mean score in the acceptance/attention dimension ($\bar{X}=37.71$), while children whose fathers were secondary school graduates had the lowest score mean score ($\bar{X}=32.87$).

Table 8

One-way ANOVA results regarding children's perceived paternal attitudes according to the father's level of education variable

ANOVA Results						
	Variance Source	Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean Square	F	P
Supervision/ Control	Between groups	267.838	3	89.279	2.264	.080
	Within groups	18169.78	420	39.436		
	Total	18384.01	423			
Acceptance/ Attention	Between groups	1479.137	3	493.046	8.168	.000
	Within groups	25351.306	420	60.360		
	Total	26830.443	423			

As seen from the one-way ANOVA results in Table 8, no significant difference ($F(3-420)=2.264$, $p>.05$) was found between children's mean scores of perceived paternal attitudes in the supervision/control dimension in terms of the father's level of education variable. However, there was a significant difference in the acceptance/attention dimension ($F(3-420)=8.168$, $p<.05$). Looking at the reason for this significant difference, it appears that this results from the fact that the mean score of children ($\bar{X}=37.71$) whose fathers were university graduates were higher than that of children ($\bar{X}=34.14$) whose fathers were high school graduates, that of children ($\bar{X}=33.00$) whose fathers were secondary school graduates, and that of children ($\bar{X}=32.87$) whose fathers were primary school graduates.

3 Discussion and suggestions

The perceived paternal attitudes of children aged between 9 and 17 years were examined in relation to child's gender, child's age, the number of siblings, father's working status, and father's level of education, and the analysis results were presented above.

According to the analysis results, children's perceived paternal attitudes did not differ according to gender both in the supervision/control and in the acceptance/attention dimensions. In other words, the paternal attitudes that boys and girls perceive in the supervision/control and acceptance/attention dimensions are similar. Looking at earlier studies on paternal attitudes, two studies were found (Bayraktar & Öğretir Özçelik, 2019; Dokuyan, 2016). In these two studies, paternal attitudes did not differ significantly according to the gender variable. Thus, the present finding is consistent with earlier studies. It can be said that fathers' attitudes toward their children do not change according to child's gender. However, some studies show that parental attitudes differ according to gender (Bülbül, 2014; Köseoğlu, 2013; Sorbring, Funnemark, & Palmerus, 2002; Subaşı & Öğretir Özçelik, 2019 & Ünal, 2018).

According to another study finding, there was no significant difference in the supervision/control dimension in terms of child's age; however, a significant difference was found in the acceptance/attention dimension. The reason for this difference is thought to be related to age. This is because parents act more protectively to protect young children from dangers. Children's independence is restricted if parental attitudes are overly controlling and protective. This prevents children from developing a sense of responsibility, and children gradually become more dependent on their parent (McNeal Jr., 2012). This is not a desirable situation in children development. Another reason is thought to be due to the decrease in the authority of parents over children as children get older. In studies conducted with adolescents by Bülbül (2014) and Dokuyan (2016) that parents become more protective and authoritative as children are younger.

The analysis results also showed a statistically significant difference in children's perceived paternal attitudes in the acceptance/attention dimension in terms of the number of siblings variable. However, there was no significant difference in the supervision/control dimension. The difference in the acceptance/attention dimension was in favour of two siblings. It can be said when the number children are lower, children become more valuable, and fathers can devote more time to their children. In a study conducted by Bülbül (2014) with adolescents, as the number of siblings decreases, parents become more democratic and establish warmer communication with their children. Likewise, Yavuzer (2017) states that as the number of siblings decreases, families become more caring. The fact that children's perceived paternal attitudes did not differ in the supervision/control dimension according to the number of siblings variable suggests that their views are similar.

While there was no significant difference in the supervision/control dimension according to the father's working status variable, there was a significant difference in the acceptance/attention dimension. Fathers' working status did not cause a difference in paternal attitudes perceived by children in the supervision/control dimension. In other words, it can be said that paternal attitudes perceived by the children whose fathers were working and those whose fathers were not working are similar to each other in the supervision/control dimension. In the acceptance/attention dimension, the arithmetic mean score of children with working fathers was higher than the arithmetic mean score of children with non-working fathers. There was a significant difference in paternal attitudes perceived by the children whose fathers were working and those whose fathers were not working in the acceptance/attention dimension. It can be said that this situation is related to the high level of education of working fathers, and thus, they are away from their children for a certain period.

Looking at the analysis results concerning father's level of education, there was no significant difference in the supervision/control dimension, while there was a

significant difference in the acceptance/attention dimension. It can be said that children's perceived paternal attitudes are similar to each other according to the father's level of education variable in the supervision/control dimension. This may be due to the traditional attitudes of fathers. Similarly, the perceived paternal attitudes of children did not differ according to father's level of education in earlier studies conducted with adolescents (Bayraktar & Öğretir Özçelik, 2019; Bülbül, 2014). Considering the difference in the acceptance/attention dimension in relation to father's level of education, the difference was in favour of children whose fathers who were university and high school graduates. A possible explanation can be that as the higher the education level of fathers is, so is their awareness and conscious.

To sum up, there was no significant difference in children's perceived paternal attitudes according to the variables of child's gender, child's age, number of siblings, father's working status, and father's level of education in the supervision/control dimension. On the other hand, there was a significant difference in the variables of child's age, child's gender, number of siblings, father's working status, and father's level of education in the acceptance/attention dimension. As a result, it is seen that fathers' child-raising attitudes vary, and when the relationship between the study and previous studies is examined, there are similarities and differences. It can be said that these similarities and differences are caused by factors such as place, time, sample, changes in parental attitudes, and socio-cultural changes. For this reason, both quantitative and qualitative studies could be conducted with different samples. In addition, to increase fathers' awareness and knowledge about parental attitudes, it may be beneficial to organize family training on parental attitudes, effective communication, and child development in public education centres.

Conclusion

The attitudes and behaviours of parents in raising children are different. These differences may result from several factors such as parents' expectations of the child to be born, whether they enjoy the parenting role or not, the number of children, child's birth order, child's gender, child's personality traits, parents' personality traits, and the interaction that parents had with their parents in their childhood. These factors influence parents' attitudes and behaviours and determine the shape and quality of the relationship between the mother, father, and child.

This may affect children's development positively or negatively. Negative parental behaviours represents a significant risk factor in children's lives as they form a vulnerable social group due to their age and lack of experience (Barnová, Tamášová & Krásna, 2019). For this reason, it is necessary to carry out family education activities to increase parents' knowledge and sensitivity of about

child-rearing attitudes and behaviours. It is also important to remember that parents are role models for their children.

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