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**COMPARING ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION LEVELS OF MENTALLY HANDICAPPED
CHILDREN'S PARENTS AND NORMALLY DEVELOPED CHILDREN'S PARENTS ***

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to compare the acceptance and rejection levels of the parents of mentally handicapped children and parents of normally developed children. The sample of the study consisted of the parents of 80 mentally handicapped children (8-18 years old) attending special education schools and parents of 80 normal children (9-12 years old) attending primary schools in Istanbul. According to research results being parents of mentally handicapped children has an effect on parent's acceptance-rejection levels. Parents of mentally retarded children have more rejection than the parents of normally developed children.

Keywords: Parental Acceptance, Parental Rejection,
Mentally Handicapped Children, Developmentally Normal
Children, Lower Socio-Economic Status

**ZİHİNSEL ENGELLİ ÇOCUĞA SAHİP ANNE-BABALAR İLE NORMAL GELİŞİM
ÖZELLİKLERİ GÖSTEREN ÇOCUĞA SAHİP ANNE BABALARIN KABUL VE RED
DÜZEYLERİNİN KARŞILAŞTIRILMASI**

ÖZET

Araştırma, zihinsel engelli çocuğa sahip anne babalar ile normal gelişim özellikleri gösteren çocuğa sahip anne babaların kabul-red düzeylerinin karşılaştırılması amacıyla yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemini, İstanbul'da özel eğitim kurumlarına devam eden, 8-18 yaş arası zihinsel engelli 80 çocuğun anne-babası ile ilköğretime devam eden, normal gelişim özellikleri gösteren 9-12 yaş arası 80 çocuğun anne babası oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre zihinsel engelli çocuğa sahip olma, anne-babanın kabul ve red düzeyi üzerinde etkilidir. Zihinsel engelli çocuğa sahip anne-babalar, normal gelişim özelliği gösteren çocuğa sahip anne-babalara göre çocuklarını daha çok reddetmektedirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ebeveyn Kabulü, Ebeveyn Reddi,
Özürü Çocuklar, Normal Gelişim Gösteren
Çocuklar, Düşük Sosyo-Ekonomik Düzey

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1. INTRODUCTION (GİRİŞ)

Parental acceptance and rejection theory (PART) is an evidence-based theory of socialization and lifespan development that attempts to predict and explain major causes, consequences and other correlates of parental acceptance and rejection within the United States and worldwide (Rohner, & Khaleque, 2005). The theory includes three sub-theories: Personality sub-theory, coping sub-theory, socio-cultural systems sub-theory (Rohner, & Khaleque, 2005). Personality Sub-theory attempts to predict and explain major personality or psychological consequences of perceived parental acceptance and rejection (Rohner, & Khaleque, 2005). Coping Sub-theory includes some basic questions: What gives some children and adults the resilience to emotionally cope with more effectively than most with the experiences of childhood rejection? Socio-cultural Systems Model and Sub-theory provide a way of thinking about the antecedents, consequences, and other correlates of parental acceptance-rejection within individuals and total societies (Rohner, & Khaleque, 2005). According to the theory there are several dimension of parental acceptance-rejection. Acceptance by parents means parental care, intimacy and affections towards their children. When parental care, intimacy and warmth decrease or diminish, rejection by parents increases. Higher levels of negative affectivity, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and antisocial and aggressive behaviour (punishment, emotional rejection etc.) would predict lower levels of parenting warmth and higher intrusiveness, and that higher levels of positive affectivity would predict higher parental warmth (Adam, Gunnar, & Tanaka, 2004; Barnow, Lunct, & Freyberger, 2001). Related research on resilient children indicate that parental warmth is a protective factor from psychiatric risk (aggression, hostility, dependence, negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, emotional unresponsiveness, emotional stability, negative world view) and some specific problems (such as teenage pregnancy, suicide, delinquency and so forth) of children (Barner, 1992; Dmitrieva et all., 2004; Finkenauer, Engels, & Baumeister, 2005; Kitahara, 1987; Nicholas, & Bieber, 1996). There are a lot of factors that are related to parental acceptance-rejection: Parent's psychological health, divorce, death of parent, characteristics of children, characteristics of parents, parent demographic variables (education, employment, income) parenting styles, gender of parents, culture and so forth (Chao, 1994; Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2003; Loue, 2005). For example, about gender of parents, mothers are expected to be more nurturing and emotionally supportive for their children than the fathers (Nicholas, & Bieber, 1996). However, relations between father and child are important as relations between mother and child in the development of children (Amato and Rivera, 1999). Abilities of parents are important to acceptance, interpretation, understand, recognize child's behaviours, thoughts, speech. Due to this, it may be experienced some problems by mentally retarded children in communication with their parents. Because parents of mentally retarded children may have difficulties in accepting their children's handicap, they may experience some communicational problems with them (Howe, 2005). Parents of mentally retarded children come through some steps (refusal, anger, guilt, depression) in the process of accepting their handicapped children (Perryman, 2005).

The aim of this research is to compare the acceptance and rejection levels of the parents of mentally handicapped children and parents of normally developed children.

Following questions were targeted to be answered in relation to the aim of the research.

- Has being parents of mentally handicapped children any effects on parent's acceptance-rejection levels?
- Does gender of children have any effects on parent's acceptance-rejection levels?
- Is there any relation between mentally handicapped children's mother acceptance-rejection levels and father acceptance-rejection levels?
- Is there any relation between normally developed children's mother acceptance-rejection levels and father acceptance-rejection levels?

2. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE (ÇALIŞMANIN ÖNEMİ)

Family is an important context of children and adolescent development. Family-related negative life events present a risk for children and adolescent depressive symptoms and problem behaviours, the direct and indirect processes that related to the children's externalizing and internalizing behaviour problems (Verlaan, & Schwartzman, 2002). Due to this, comparing acceptance and rejection levels of mentally handicapped children's parents and normally developed children's parents seems an interesting area to study for especially increasing knowledge in supporting the development of mentally handicapped children.

The sample of the study is limited to parents of 80 children attending special education schools for handicapped children and parents of 80 normal children attending primary schools in Istanbul.

The scope of the study is limited with relations between interpersonal problem solving and emphatic skills of sampling group.

Demographic data are limited with responses in personal information forms.

3. METHOD (YÖNTEM)

3.1. The Design of Research (Araştırmanın Modeli)

Relational survey method was used to compare the acceptance and rejection levels of the parents of mentally handicapped and parents of normally developed children. Relational survey method is for testing the existence and/or degree of parallel change between two or more variables (Karasar, 2009).

3.2. The Sample of Study (Örneklem)

The sample of the study consisted of the parents of 80 mentally handicapped children attending special education schools and parents of 80 normal children attending primary schools in Istanbul. There were 70 girls (43.8%) and 90 boys (56.3%) in the total of sample. There were 80 mentally handicapped children (50.0%) and 80 normally developed children (50.0%) in the total sample.

There were 77 mothers (50.0%) of mentally handicapped children, 77 mothers (50.0%) of normally developed children in the total sample. 51 (39.2%) fathers of mentally handicapped children, 79 fathers (%60.8) of normally developed children in the total sample.

- **The Sample Group of Mentally Handicapped Children (Zihinsel Engelli Çocukların Örneklem Grubu)**

There were 34 girls (43.8%) and 43 boys (56.3%) in the group of mentally handicapped children. 34 (42.5%) of mentally handicapped children were 8-10 years old, 34 (42.5%) of them 11-15 years old, 12 (15.0%) of them 16-18 years old.

There were 50 children (62.3%) of mental retardation (middle and high levels) and 16 children (20.0%) otistic, 5 children (6.3%) down syndrome, 4 children (5.0%) microcephaly, 3 children (3.8%) cerebral palsy, 1 child (1.3%) west syndrome, one child (1.3%) aphasy in the group of mentally handicapped children.

- **The Sample Group of Normally Developed Children
(Normal Gelişim Gösteren Çocukların Örneklem Grubu)**

There were 35 girls (43.8%) and 45 boys (56.3%) in the group of normally developed children.

33 (41.2%) of normally developed children were 9 years old, 19 (23.8%) of them 10 years old, 12 (15.0%) of them 11 years old, 16 (20.0%) of them 12 years old.

3.3. Instruments (Veri Toplama Araçları)

- **Form of Demographic Data (Kişisel Bilgi Formu)**

The researchers prepared a form of demographic data there were same questions about children, mother and father such as age and gender of children etc.

- **The Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ)
(Ebeveyn Kabul Ölçeği- EKRÖ)**

The Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) is a self report instrument designed to measure individual's perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection (Rohner and Khaleque, 2005). This scale was developed by Rohner, Saaveda and Granum in 1980. It was revised by Rohner in 1997. The translation of this scale into Turkish was done by Anjel and Erkman in 1993. Linguistic equivalence of the scale was tested by Erkman in 2002 (qtd. Toran, 2005). It is a scale with four-points-likert consists of 60 items on which parents of three-years old children can fill out by themselves (Öner, 1997). PARQ consists of four sub-scales: Warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated/rejection (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005). The total score obtained on the scale indicates total rejection level. The higher score means higher level of rejections, lower level of acceptance. There is no cut off point in the scale (Toran, 2005).

3.4. Procedure (İşlem)

The instruments of measurement were filled out by mothers and fathers of children. Fathers and mothers separately filled out the scale.

3.5. Analysis of Data (Verilerin Analizi)

Distributions of frequencies and percentages were calculated in order to analyze data obtained from personal information form.

A two-way ANOVA was used to investigate the acceptance-rejection levels of parents in relation to the variables of gender and being mentally handicapped.

The Pearson-Moments Correlation Technique was used to see the relation between the acceptance-rejection levels of mothers and fathers of both groups of mentally handicapped and normal children.

4. FINDINGS (BULGULAR)

Table 1. The descriptive statistics of mothers' acceptance-rejection levels in relation to gender and being mentally handicapped.

(Tablo 1. Cinsiyete ve zihinsel engelli olma değişkenlerine göre annelerin kabul-red düzeylerinin betimsel istatistiği)

Gender		N	X	S
Girl	Mentally handicapped children	34	94,3529	22,3062
	Normally developed children	34	84,2059	18,5109
	Total	68	89,2794	20,9754
Boy	Mentally handicapped children	43	94,9767	23,1830
	Normally developed children	43	87,0000	16,3532
	Total	86	90,9884	20,3421
Total	Mentally handicapped children	77	94,7013	22,6530
	Normally developed children	77	85,7662	17,2778
	Total	154	90,2338	20,5737

Table 2. The ANOVA results of mothers' acceptance-rejection levels in relation to gender and being mentally handicapped.

(Tablo 2. Cinsiyete ve zihinsel engelli olma değişkenlerine göre annelerin kabul-red düzeylerinin ANOVA sonuçları)

Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	p
Gender	110,905	1	110,905	,270	,604
Children (nor. & m.hnd)	3118,353	1	3118,353	7,602	,007*
G* C	44,717	1	44,717	,109	,742
Error	61532,300	150	410,215		
Total	1318650,000	154			

* p < .01

Table 2 reveals that a significant difference was found in the favour of being mothers of mentally handicapped children [F (1-154) = 7,602, p < .01]. The mean score of rejection for mentally handicapped children's mothers were higher (X = 94,7013) than mothers of normally developed children (X = 85,7662). Gender of children has no effect mother's rejection level. Having boys or girls did not affect the rejection level of both groups of mothers [F (1-154) = ,270, p > .01].

Table 3. The descriptive statistics of fathers' acceptance-rejection levels in relation to gender and being mentally handicapped.

(Tablo 3. Cinsiyete ve zihinsel engelli olma değişkenlerine göre babaların kabul-red düzeylerinin betimsel istatistiği)

Gender		N	X	S
Girl	Mentally handicapped children	24	94,9167	22,5984
	Normally developed children	35	86,1429	19,9767
	Total	59	89,7119	21,3389
Boy	Mentally handicapped children	27	100,6667	25,2541
	Normally developed children	44	90,6818	18,7564
	Total	71	94,4789	21,8363
Total	Mentally handicapped children	51	97,9608	23,9783
	Normally developed children	79	88,6709	19,3144
	Total	130	92,3154	21,6598

Table 4. The ANOVA results of fathers' acceptance-rejection levels in relation to gender and being mentally handicapped.

(Tablo4. Cinsiyete ve zihinsel engelli olma değişkenlerine göre babaların kabul-red düzeylerinin ANOVA sonuçları)

Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	p
Gender	814,314	1	814,314	1,799	,182
Children (nor. & m.hand)	2706,775	1	2706,775	5,981	,016*
G* C	11,281	1	11,281	,025	,875
Error	57023,665	126	452,569		
Total	1168397,000	130			

* $p < .05$

Table 4 shows that a significant difference was found in the favour of being fathers of mentally handicapped children [$F(1-130) = 5,981, p < .05$]. The mean score of rejection for mentally handicapped children's fathers were higher ($X = 97,9608$) than fathers of normally developed children ($X = 88,6709$). Gender of children has no effect on father's rejection levels. Having boys or girls did not affect the rejection level of both groups of fathers [$F(1-130) = 1,799, p > .01$].

Table 5. The relation between mentally handicapped children's mothers' and fathers' acceptance-rejection levels

(Tablo 5. Zihinsel engelli çocukların annelerinin ve babalarının kabul-red düzeyleri arasındaki ilişki)

	N	X	sd	r
Mentally handicapped children's mother acceptance	77	85,7662	17,2778	,582*
Mentally handicapped children's father acceptance	79	88,6709	19,3144	

* $p < .01$

Table 5 indicates that there is a strong, positive and significant relation between mentally handicapped children's mothers acceptance- rejection and fathers acceptance-rejection level ($r = ,582, p < .01$). According to this result while mentally handicapped children's mother acceptance-rejection is increasing so is father acceptance-rejection level. It can also be said that while mentally handicapped children's mother's acceptance-rejection is decreasing so is father's acceptance-rejection level.

Table 6. The relation between normally developed children's mothers' and fathers' acceptance-rejection levels

(Tablo 6. Normal gelişim özellikleri gösteren çocukların annelerinin ve babalarının kabul-red düzeyleri arasındaki ilişki)

	N	X	sd	r
Normally developed children's mother acceptance	77	94,7013	22,6530	,732*
Normally developed children's father acceptance	51	97,9608	23,9783	

* $p < .01$

Table 6 indicates that there is a strong, positive and significant relation between normally developed children's mothers acceptance- rejection and fathers acceptance- rejection level ($r = ,732, p < .01$). According to these results while normally developed children's mother's acceptance-rejection is increasing so is father's

acceptance-rejection level. It can be concluded that while normally developed children's mothers acceptance-rejection is decreasing so is father acceptance-rejection level.

5. RESULT-DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS (SONUÇ-TARTIŞMA VE ÖNERİLER)

The aim of this research was to compare the acceptance and rejection levels of the parents of mentally handicapped and parents of normally developed children.

The results of the research can be outlined as follows: Being parents of mentally handicapped children has an effect on parent's acceptance-rejection levels. Parents of mentally retarded children have more rejection than the parents of normally developed children. This result of the study was not supported by some other studies. For instance Ansari (2002) has found that the parents showed great acceptance for their disabled children, as compared to nondisabled children. This difference may be explained by different cultural values related to having handicapped children in different countries.

Furthermore it was found that gender of child has not an effect on parent acceptance-rejection levels. This result of the present study was supported by some other studies. Ansari (2002) has found that gender of child has no effect on parent acceptance-rejection levels. Akse et. all, (2004) found that gender of normally developed children has effects on parents acceptance-rejection levels. Boys were rejected more than girls. Deater-Decker, Ivy and Petrill (2006) found that mothers displayed higher warmth for girls, lower warmth for boys. Furthermore, they underlined that mothers displayed more physical violence towards boys than girls.

Another result of this research was that there is a strong, positive and significant relation between mentally handicapped children's mother acceptance-rejection and father acceptance-rejection levels and normally developed children's mother acceptance-rejection and father acceptance-rejection levels. Patterson (1989) reported that father behaviour towards the child influence mother-child relations (qtd. Verlaan and Schwartzman, 2002). Harper et. all (2006) has found that the gender of supportive parent moderated the effects of punishment from opposite-sex parent. For example, at low levels of father support mother corporal punishment increased.

The international research done in acceptance-rejection levels of mentally handicapped children's parents are rather limited. The studies done in this field are generally about the parents of normal developed elementary and preschool children with the variables of socio-economic-levels, self-esteem, mother's acceptance and rejection levels in Turkey too (Erkan, & Toran, 2004; Erözkan, 2009; Koydemir-Özden, & Demir, 2009; Önder, & Gülay, 2007; Pektaş, & Özgür, 2005). Therefore, this research which compare the acceptance and rejection levels of mentally handicapped and normally developed children's parents present a different point of view to the issue.

This difference between our results and other research results may stem from cultural and methodological differences like cultural values, research-designs, instruments of measurement etc. Research in the future may target to investigate some other variables such as, socio-economic levels of parents, educational levels of parents, existence of normally developed children in the family of mentally handicapped children. Some studies can be done to compare parents' acceptance-rejection levels of children from different handicapped groups. The short and long range effects of parent's acceptance-rejection on other developmental areas of children can be

investigated. The service of guidance in coping with difficulties in child care and education for parents of mentally handicapped children should be provided. Counselling services can also be organized to give married couples information about child care and child rearing in order to decrease the negative effects of parental acceptance-rejection.

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