

**THE EFFECTS OF PARENTING BELIEFS ON CHILDREN'S
ADJUSTMENT IN TURKEY**

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ADJUSTMENT IN TURKEY**

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis focuses on the effects of parental ethnotheories (i.e., cultural beliefs about child development) on children's adjustment. Past literature on the association between cultural parenting beliefs and outcomes for children has been lacking. This study aimed to address the gap in the literature by investigating the link between parental ethnotheories and child adjustment. Drawing from past literature on cultural models, parenting beliefs were examined within the cultural context in a large project supported by TÜBİTAK (1003-118K050). A representative sample of parents ($N = 1398$) in Turkey completed the Parenting Beliefs Scale (PBS) developed based on the common beliefs about a child's nature and child-rearing practices. Parents were asked to rate the target child's psychological adjustment using the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Both measures were factor analyzed to see the underlying culture-specific dimensions of parental beliefs and child adjustment. Factor analyses on the items of the PBS yielded three factors, representing (1) negative and (2) positive beliefs/attributions about child nature and (3) the environment shapes the child. Factor analyses on the SDQ yielded two general factors, one representing the combination of all problem behaviors and the other representing prosocial behaviors. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to predict the two adjustment variables from the three types of parenting beliefs after controlling for the effects of socio-demographic variables. The results showed that all three types of parenting beliefs significantly predicted both problem and proso-

cial behaviors, above and beyond the effects of socio-demographic characteristics. Negative parenting beliefs explained much larger variances in problem behaviors than positive ones. The predictive power of the parenting beliefs that environment shapes the child was relatively weaker than the other two types of parenting beliefs. Separate analyses of variance (ANOVA) revealed an interaction effect between parent and child gender on problem behaviors, and a significant effect of parent gender on negative parenting beliefs. Mothers reported higher levels of negative parenting beliefs than fathers. Finally, fathers' reports of their daughters' problem behaviors were higher than those of their sons. The findings were discussed, considering the cultural implications and parenting consequences of child-rearing beliefs in Turkey in light of the existing literature.

ÖZET

TÜRKİYE'DE EBEVEYNLİK İNANÇLARININ ÇOCUĞUN UYUMU ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

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PSİKOLOJİ YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, ARALIK 2023

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel Ebeveynlik İnanışları, Ebeveynlik Etno-Teorileri,
Ebeveynlik, Çocuk Uyumu

Bu tezin amacı ebeveyn etno-teorilerinin (çocuk gelişimi hakkındaki kültürel inançların) çocukların uyumları üzerindeki etkisini incelemektir. Geçmiş çalışmalar ebeveynlik inanışlarıyla çocuğun uyum davranışları arasındaki ilişkiyi yeterli düzeyde incelememiştir. Bu çalışma etno-teoriler temelindeki kültürel modelleri dikkate alarak, ebeveynlik inanışlarıyla çocuğun uyumu arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırarak literatürdeki boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır. TÜBİTAK (1003-118K050) tarafından desteklenen, Türkiye çapında temsili örneklemin kullanıldığı geniş bir projede ebeveyn katılımcılardan ($N = 1398$) veri toplanmıştır. Katılımcılar, Türkiye kültüründe çocuk yetiştirme ve çocuğun doğana ilişkin yaygın inanışlar temelinde geliştirilen Ebeveynlik İnanışları Ölçeğini (EİÖ) ve hedef çocuklarının psikolojik uyumunu ölçen Güçler ve Güçlükler Ölçeği (GGÖ) doldurmuşlardır. Her iki ölçüme de ebeveyn inanışları ve çocuk uyumunun kültürel bağlamdaki örüntüsünü anlamak amacıyla faktör analizi uygulanmıştır. EİÖ'nün maddeleri üzerinde yapılan faktör analizinde üç faktör ortaya çıkmıştır: (1) çocuk doğası hakkında olumsuz, ve (2) olumlu inanışlar/atıflar ve (3) çevrenin çocuk üzerindeki etkisine dair inanışlar/atıflar. GGÖ üzerinde yapılan faktör analizinde ise bütün problem davranışlar tek bir faktör altında toplanmış, prososyal davranışlar ise bağımsız faktör olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Tanımlanan üç farklı ebeveynlik inanışının, sosyo-demografik değişkenlerin etkileri kontrol edildikten sonra, iki çocuk uyumu değişkenini yordama düzeyi aşamalı regresyon analizleri kullanılarak test edilmiştir.

Bulgular, üç ebeveynlik inanışının da sosyo-demografik özelliklerin etkilerinin ötesinde hem problem hem de prososyal davranışları anlamlı düzeyde yordadığını göstermiştir. Olumsuz ebeveynlik inanışlarının, problem davranışları, olumlu ebeveynlik inanışlarından daha güçlü şekilde yordadığı bulunmuştur. Çevrenin çocuğu şekillendiren ebeveynlik inanışlarının yordama gücü ise diğer iki ebeveynlik inanç türlerinden görece daha zayıf bulunmuştur. Ebeveyn ve çocuk cinsiyetinin etkisini incelemek amacıyla yapılan, tek yönlü varyans analizleri (ANOVA) anlamlı temel etki ve ebeveyn/çocuk cinsiyetine yönelik problem davranışları üzerinde anlamlı etkileşim etkisi olduğunu göstermiştir. Annelerin olumsuz ebeveynlik inanışlarının babalardan anlamlı düzeyde yüksek olduğu bulunmuştur. Son olarak, babaların kız çocukları için bildirdikleri problem davranış düzeyinin erkek çocukları için bildirdiklerinden daha yüksek olduğu gözlenmiştir. Bulgular, mevcut literatür ışığında Türkiye’de çocuk yetiştirme inanışlarının ebeveynlik davranışlarına ve bu davranışların çocuğun uyumuna etkisi kültürel farklılıklar göz önüne alınarak tartışılmıştır.

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I would like to dedicate this to my family and friends.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Introduction

Parenting is a universal concept that can manifest as a variety of different behaviors and cognitions. One factor that causes variance in forms of parenting is culture. Influenced by culturally shared beliefs, parents may possess different views on the process of child development, as well as the role of the parents within that process. The presence of cultural differences in parenting raises an important issue: Can there be universally optimal parenting? Or is optimal child development too variable for there to be a “one-size-fits-all” parenting type? While universal approaches have their merits, studying parenting and child development in the cultural context can further our understanding on the potential existence and the characteristics of optimal parenting. Culture-specific approaches may also help identify localized issues that families may face. Given the complexity of cultural variance within human behavior and cognition, the aim of this thesis is to investigate the effects of parents’ culturally-influenced parenting beliefs (known as parental ethnotheories) on children within a culturally representative sample from Turkey.

The subject of this study, which is parenting beliefs, may be categorized under the broader construct of parenting cognitions. Parenting cognitions can be defined as parents’ knowledge, satisfaction, and attributions regarding parenting, and they guide their parenting practices (Bornstein, Putnick, and Suwalsky 2018). Similar to many aspects of human thought and behavior, parenting cognitions are subject to cultural influences, and may significantly vary across cultures (Bornstein 2012). Where one cultural group may endorse a certain child-rearing practice, another cultural group may find that practice to be inappropriate. Due to the wide-ranging influence of culture, it becomes pivotal to adopt cultural approaches in the study of parenting cognitions, and parenting beliefs as a result. In the following sections, the influence of culture on parenting beliefs and practices will be explored. First,

I will give a brief review on the Developmental Niche Model (Super and Harkness 1986), to explain the approach that is adopted in this study. This will be followed by examples of how parenting beliefs and practices may be influenced by culture, from various cross-cultural and intra-cultural studies in the literature. I will also be talking about how those beliefs and practices are associated with certain outcomes for children. Finally, at the end of this section, I will talk about the research question of the thesis.

1.2 Parental Ethnotheories

Driven from research merging anthropological and psychological perspectives, Harkness and Super created the Developmental Niche Model (Super and Harkness 1986). This model takes child development as intertwined with the child's environment and the cultural context. Within the model, one of the three core components is parents' culturally influenced beliefs about how to raise their children, also known as parental ethnotheories (Super and Harkness 1986). In the context of child development, parental ethnotheories are often implicit beliefs that parents hold towards various aspects of raising children Harkness and Super (1996). To some extent, these beliefs reflect parents' perceptions of themselves as caregivers, as well as their perceptions of their child. These beliefs may also guide parents' behavior and attitudes towards their children, which in turn can influence how parents engage in caregiving activities. For instance, Kipsigi mothers believed that their children learned language better from interacting with peers than when they interact with their parents (Super and Harkness 1986). This belief was reflected in those parents' language socialization goals, as well as their behavior. Another notable trend reported in this study was that Kipsigi mothers did not interact as much with their children in contrast to parents from the U.S., potentially showcasing the alignment of their parenting beliefs and practices regarding their children's language socialization.

Although the Developmental Niche Model will be the main framework used in this study, it is worthy of note that there are other perspectives of parenting in the cultural context that may provide insights. Kagitcibasi's family change theory (Kagitcibasi 1996, 2007; Kagitcibasi and Ataca 2005) is a widely used framework of the family unit that combines culture and living conditions as its dimension. The framework describes three types of family models: the model of interdependence, the model of independence, and the model of emotional interdependence. These family models are characterized by different dynamics within the family, which are

affected by the cultural and ecological variables surrounding the family. A study that used the Family Change Theory as its framework examined the expectations of mothers on whether they would receive support from their offspring in the future, and the actual support that their adolescents at that time showed, comparing four countries (Kagitcibasi, Ataca, and Diri 2010). They found that mothers from the countries with higher interdependence (i.e., Turkey, Israel and Palestine) had greater expectations of future support and received more support from their children relative to a country with lower interdependence (Germany). They also found that SES (socio-economic status) and education also had an effect on mothers' expectations, in that mothers from rural areas and mothers who were less educated generally had greater expectations of receiving future support from their children. These findings highlight the phenomenon of socio-demographical differences causing variation in parenting cognitions, even within the same cultural or ethnic group, and thus carry potential implications for the study of parental ethnotheories as well.

Although relatively less studied compared to explicit parenting behaviors, the impact of culturally influenced beliefs on parents' child-rearing-practices have been shown by cross-cultural, as well as intra-cultural studies. Cross-cultural comparisons and within culture investigations may both advocate for the variety in parents' ethnotheories. For instance, Parmar, Harkness, and Super (2004) found profound differences between Euro-American and Asian parents' ethnotheories regarding their preschooler children's learning and play activities. They reported that while Euro-American parents emphasized play as a useful means for fostering positive child development, Asian parents did not see such benefits of play as much. Asian parents instead emphasized their goals to facilitate learning and academic skills, for the purpose of getting their children a head start at school. As a result, children of Asian parents were found to put more time into learning and academic activities than the children of Euro-American parents. As another example, ethnotheories of children's learning showed both similarities and differences across mothers of different cultures, and this in turn was associated with mothers playing different roles in their children's learning (Harkness et al. 2009; Harkness 2007). For instance, in this study, mothers from the U.S. believed that an essential part of their children's learning was stimulation and consequently, mothers tended to create environments that would stimulate their children (e.g., buying toys and playing with the child). While Italian mothers also emphasized the importance of stimulation on their children's learning, they commonly believed social interaction to be the way for stimulation, and thus they focused on providing social stimulation to their children. Both ethnotheories were contrasted by the Dutch mothers, who emphasized particularly the sleeping conditions and routines of their children and generating regularity in their

lives as important for their children's learning.

Research on parental ethnotheories showcase differing beliefs of parents regarding their children's relationships. For instance, a study by Aukrust et al. (2003) revealed cross-cultural differences in parental ethnotheories of pre-school and elementary school children's relationships outside of the family. Among their findings, they reported that most parents endorsed their children's outside of family relationships. However, it was found that more so than parents from Ankara and Lincoln, parents from Oslo and Seoul seemed to believe that close relationships outside of the family are not harmful to their relationships within the family. They also found differences across parents' education level, as more educated parents believed that their children had more close relationships at school, while less educated parents believed that their children had more close relationships among their neighbors and family friends.

These differences show that parental ethnotheories can vary not only across countries, but also across demographic factors such as education level and SES. As illustrated by the example of Kagitcibasi, Ataca, and Diri (2010), different patterns of parental cognitions may emerge from members of a cultural group due to factors such as education and SES. Another study assessed Turkish parents' ethnotheories of their children's sibling relationships (Kapısız and Sieben 2022). They found that the majority of the parents believed their children's relationship with their sibling to be very close, and they expected their children to always love and support each other. The study also showed differences in mothers' ethnotheories regarding sibling conflict: with some of the mothers believing that conflict amongst their children can harm their relationship, while others believing that conflict may be an inevitable part of the siblings' daily routine and therefore it would not harm their relationship. The role of peer relationships in the child's socialization are hard to replace (Bukowski 2003). It is essential for parents and caregivers to provide the means to support peer socialization. As a result, parental ethnotheories about children's peer relationships would require further consideration by scholars.

The power of ethnotheories in influencing parental behaviors and goals makes them critical factors of consideration for child development. The child rearing practices, partly directed by parents' beliefs can have consequences on not only the child's health and well-being, but also on the emergence of their daily routines and habits, and perhaps to some degree, their lifestyles. For instance, parental ethnotheories of healthy eating were associated with parenting practices of planning and organizing their children's daily eating routines and supporting healthy eating behaviors (Srivastava et al. 2019). These practices guided by parents' ethnotheories may translate

into the formation of some of the child's habits (in this case, their eating habits). In a similar sense, ethnotheories also influence how parents organize the environment around which the child is raised (Harkness and Super 1996). For instance, in the previously mentioned study by Harkness (2007), Italian mothers and U.S. mothers had different goals to stimulate their children; the former leaning towards social stimulation, and the latter leaning towards cognitive stimulation. As a result, Italian mothers were more likely to provide environments where their children would experience social interactions, compared to the U.S. mothers who showed a preference towards provide stimulating objects and events (e.g., games).

The relationship between parental ethnotheories and practices can at times be ambiguous. While parent's child-rearing practices are often guided by their ethnotheories, sometimes there can be discrepancies between the two. For instance, immigrant parents' ethnotheories may be influenced by both the host and the heritage cultures, which can cause them to engage in parenting practices that do not reflect their ethnotheories well (e.g., Mao, Doan, and Handford 2023). Having conflicting ethnotheories may cultivate uncertainty in a parent's implementation of their goals and beliefs as parenting practices. This also shows that merely observing parents' child rearing practices is not enough to understand their parental ethnotheories. Furthermore, in line with Greenfield's theory of social change (Greenfield 2009), the cultural values which serve as the driving force behind parental ethnotheories may change over time as a result of the changes in the ecologies of sociodemographic variables. As a result, ethnotheories may also change and diversify in a given culture, most notably within fast-changing, developing countries such as Turkey. To illustrate variation within Turkey's parenting styles, Ayçiçeği Dinn and Sunar (2017) found that parents from the Western region of Turkey engaged in parenting practices which sharply contrasted those from the Metropolitan and Eastern regions. More specifically, parents from the Western region generally displayed more acceptance and less control than those of the other two regions. Another idea that could be derived from the influence of social change on ethnotheories is that parenting beliefs may also differ across generations of parents. This may be illustrated, at least to an extent, by the findings of Keller and Demuth (2006), showing that there were some minor but notable differences between the parental ethnotheories of mothers and grandmothers. Liu, Harkness, and Super (2020) also argue that the parental ethnotheories in China has gone through changes due to the socio-demographical changes in the country. The constant and at-times unpredictable change in cultural values particularly highlights the potential significance of demographic factors such as parental age and education level, in investigations of parental ethnotheories.

Various studies about parental ethnotheories focus on parents' beliefs regarding chil-

dren's negative behaviors and traits. Parents may perceive certain characteristics and behaviors as maladaptive for the child in their cultural context. For instance, among Taiwanese mothers it was found that self-esteem in early childhood was commonly seen in a negative light, in that it could lead to the child developing maladaptive behaviors like being too stubborn (Miller et al. 2017; Olson et al. 2019). In the same study, contrary to Taiwanese mothers' ethnotheories about child's self-esteem, European American mothers commonly believed that building self-esteem is an important parenting goal. The ethnotheories of maladaptive behavior may motivate parents to adopt certain parenting practices that they believe to be appropriate for dealing with such traits and behaviors. For instance, while beating the child may be considered as a way of disciplining maladaptive behavior in Jamaica, such harsh practices were a lot less common among Japanese parents (Guerra, Hammons, and Clutter 2011). However, it should also be noted that how such harsh parenting practices, guided by parental ethnotheories, affect children's social and emotional adjustment has not been studied.

Studies of parents' ethnotheories can give insights into parents' perceptions of their children's goals and motivations. U.S. mothers from two different cultural backgrounds (i.e., European American and Mexican heritage) differed in their views towards their children's helpfulness and motivation to help in their prosocial engagement in day-to-day tasks (Coppens, Corwin, and Alcalá 2020). In their study, linguistic evidence from interviews showed that more European-American mothers attributed their children's intentions as not related to helping and exerted more control over how they helped, while Mexican heritage mothers were more likely to believe that their children are self-motivated to engage in prosocial behavior. These findings hint at the idea that culturally influenced belief systems do not only affect parents' beliefs about parenting and child development, but also their attributions regarding the child having agency or not. In this regard, a study found that Swedish parents' perceptions of their children's agency was predicted by the parents' warmth, in that parents who were warmer were more likely to believe in their child's agency one year later (Gurdal, Lansford, and Sorbring 2016). They also found that perceptions of children's agency subsequently predicted child adjustment the next year.

Parental ethnotheories can also direct the attention to the parents themselves, with the question of how their children should ideally be raised. Parents' efforts to meet their goals of parenting, with such goals often being culturally influenced, can be a defining factor in how they raise their children. Lin et al. (2023) compared parents' beliefs of how an ideal parent should be like across various cultures across the world. Their study revealed cultural patterns of parental beliefs regarding which traits parents should ideally possess. For instance, their results showed that Asian, Hispanic,

and African parents all emphasized being responsible, but Asian parents also emphasized being family-focused, African parents emphasized being proper demeanor-focused, and Hispanic parents emphasized being loving. Keller and Demuth (2006) investigated the similarities and differences between German and American mothers and grandmothers' socialization goals and their ethnotheories of proper childcare. Their study revealed that the samples from Berlin and Los Angeles were similar in the sense that they both emphasized good cognitive and brain development as their parenting goals. They found differences emerging regarding their beliefs on the parents' intimate activities with their children. While mothers and grandmothers from Los Angeles saw close activities such as breastfeeding and Beschäftigung (playing) to mainly serve the child's cognitive and physical development, German mothers and grandmothers also emphasized that such activities were good opportunities to bond with the child and express their affection towards them, on top of supporting their development.

1.3 The Significance of Parental Ethnotheories for Socialization Goals

As established by attachment research, the bond between the caregiver(s) and the child has a lasting impact on the latter in terms of their socialization and development as an individual (Bowlby 1969). Given this precious bond between the caregiver and the child, it could be argued that parents can influence their children in more ways than may be apparent in their specific parenting practices. A relevant example for this might be the parents' reflective self-functioning, which shows the caregivers' mentalization capacity to be predictive of how well they provide the means for their children's physical and emotional needs, and as a result, this capacity is predictive of the child's attachment security (Fonagy et al. 1991). The notion that the child is influenced by their parents more than what is shown in the parents' behavior promotes the importance of the parents' internal states in considering child development.

Looking beyond parents' practices, their socialization goals are important factors for consideration. Parents' socialization goals are particularly relevant, as they are argued to be closely linked to parental ethnotheories (Keller et al. 2006). More particularly, parental ethnotheories are likely guided by general socialization goals of parents. Similar to the cultural variation observed within ethnotheories, the cultural context also reveals different patterns of how parents aim to raise their children. In a study mentioned earlier, parents from different continents had different ideas of what

an ideal parent should be like (Lin et al. 2023). In regard to what characteristics parents would like to see in their children Sümer et al. (2022) conducted a within culture investigation of socialization goals of parents from Turkey. They found that parents aimed to raise children who are first and foremost: well-mannered, well-educated, respectful, devoted to their family, and autonomous. The patterns of parents' socialization goals within a culture may help determine what is considered appropriate in the given cultural context. As such, socialization goals can pave the way for parental ethnotheories to translate into parenting practices.

Among various factors constituting parents' internal states, parental ethnotheories may be of particular interest on the premise of their wide-ranging influence in any given community. While specific parenting practices also showcase how children may be affected by their caretakers' psychology, parental ethnotheories display a general overarching theme of parents' understanding of parenting and child development in a given setting. Therefore, parental ethnotheories may be a significant factor to consider regarding their impact on the child's health and well-being throughout the course of their development.

Past work has documented the wide-ranging influence of parental ethnotheories on child development in their given community. Parents may hold a variety of different beliefs regarding the nature of child development, and these beliefs may shape their child-rearing practices, as well as their parenting goals and attitudes. Within the Developmental Niche framework, parental ethnotheories are part of the broader concept of "psychology of the caretakers" (Super and Harkness 2002). The parents' goals, beliefs and attitudes form this crucial aspect of the framework, and the literature has revealed its implications for parenting and child development. However, the particular outcomes of parents' goals, beliefs, and attitudes on children's health, well-being and conduct require further consideration. Investigating the presence and the strength of the links between culturally influenced parenting beliefs and particular outcomes on the developing child remains an important goal for the field.

1.4 Parenting Beliefs and Child Adjustment

The link between parenting and adjustment has been extensively investigated in the previous studies. Problem behaviors, as a poor adjustment outcome, have been shown to be associated with controlling parenting practices (e.g., Gadeyne, Ghesquière, and Onghena 2004; Pettit et al. 2001; Scharf and Goldner 2018). More specifically, externalizing and internalizing behavior have generally been predictive

of non-optimal parenting practices such as psychological control (e.g., Cui and Silk 2014) and physical punishment (e.g., MacKenzie et al. 2012; McLoyd and Smith 2002). In a similar fashion, another study found that children who experienced maltreatment such as neglect and/or abuse had more internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and poor school adjustment (Shonk and Cicchetti 2001). In a meta-analysis, harsh parenting was found to be associated with externalizing and internalizing behaviors, and this finding was consistent across many cultural geographies spanning Asia, Africa, North and South America, and Europe (Pinquart 2021). The overall trend within parenting practices and behaviors shows that certain parenting styles may be associated with poor child adjustment outcomes. In line with this notion, one of the classifications of parenting practices made by Brenner and Fox (1999) was particularly associated with behavior problems. More specifically, their study revealed that mothers with high discipline, low nurturing, and moderate to high expectations employed relatively non-supportive and punitive parenting behaviors, and they were more likely to report behavior problems for their children. Additionally, the aforementioned classification of mothers includes the characteristic of having high expectations from the child, which may point towards the role of parents' cognitions of the child within the given association.

Prosocial behavior, as an indicator of positive child adjustment, may also be predictive of certain parenting styles and practices. A study found that parental warmth predicted stronger attachment among adolescents, which in turn was associated with more engagement in prosocial behaviors (Malonda et al. 2019). In another line of research, Carlo et al. (2007) found that parenting practices that involve child-centered conversation about moral issues increase the child's sympathy, which in turn promotes prosocial behavior. In contrast, some other parenting practices may hinder the tendency to engage in prosocial behavior. For instance, Baldry and Farrington (1998) found that punitive parenting practices were associated with children's involvement in bullying, and that children who were bullies were low on prosocial behavior, suggesting poor adjustment. It is also worthy of note that certain demographic and parental personal characteristics may lessen the impact of such practices on children. A meta-analysis revealed that parents' emotion regulation skills were related to fewer internalizing behavior problems for their children (Zimmer-Gembeck et al. 2022). Similarly, Anderson et al. (2022) reported that lower externalizing and internalizing symptoms were observed among families of relatively higher SES.

Given the extent of findings on the link between parenting practices and adjustment, there have been relatively fewer studies looking into the dynamics between parental beliefs and adjustment. A longitudinal study investigated the relationships between parental perceptions and child social wariness (Rubin et al. 1999). They found that

parents who perceived their child at 2 years of age as shy encouraged their children's independence less when their children became 4-year-olds. Although this might provide insights into how parenting cognitions are associated with parenting behavior, how both of these parent-level factors dynamically influence children's adjustment and well-being remains a relevant point of inquiry. As a staple of research in this field, Bornstein, Putnick, and Suwalsky (2018) examined the long-term effects of parenting cognitions on parenting practices, and later, on child adjustment. They found that parental cognitions about parents' involvement in the development of their children was linked to supportive parenting practices a few years later. Those supportive parenting practices, in turn, was linked to less externalizing behaviors reported by the teachers. The reported results did not change according to child gender. The study of (Bornstein, Putnick, and Suwalsky 2018) brings valuable insights on the long-term association between the parents' beliefs and behavior problems. However, it is not clear whether the same conclusion can be applied in the context of parental ethnotheories. Parental ethnotheories can be defined as culturally based parenting cognitions, and they reflect common belief patterns within a given cultural setting. Therefore, parental ethnotheories as a perspective may differ from the general approach to parenting cognitions. For this purpose, the links between parental ethnotheories and adjustment outcomes would need to be identified.

Previous studies have identified the influence of parenting behaviors and practices on child well-being and adjustment outcomes. However, the effects of various parental beliefs on child-level outcomes, such as well-being and adjustment, have not received as much attention. The present study aims to contribute to understanding how parental ethnotheories among Turkish parents may positively and negatively influence child adjustment. The aim of this study is to investigate the associations between types of parenting beliefs and the child's psychological adjustment within a culturally representative sample from Turkey. I expect that parenting beliefs which validate the child's emotions and have a positive and understanding approach towards child development would predict less adjustment problems (e.g., internalizing, externalizing behaviors). In contrast, I expect parenting beliefs which invalidate the child's emotions, and have an overall negative outlook towards the child's capacity to develop and learn would predict more adjustment problems. I will test whether parental beliefs predict child adjustment above and beyond the effects of socio-demographic variables. I will also analyze the effects of parent and child gender on parenting beliefs.

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

The present study used data from a large-scale study titled “Socio-cultural and Psychological Antecedents and Consequences of Child-rearing Styles Across Generations and Developmental Stages in Turkey” funded by TÜBİTAK (1003-118K050). A representative sample of parents in Turkey, based on NUTS 26 regions, was recruited. Only a part of the data from that project was used in the scope of this study.

Turkish parents ($N = 1399$) responded to the survey questions in face-to face interview sessions (see Sümer et al. 2022, for the details of the data collection process). Among these parents, their children’s age ranged from 4 to 17. One participant was excluded as an outlier. The final sample consisted of 1398 parents. Demographic information regarding parents is shown on Table 2.1. Among the parents, 793 were mothers (56.7%, mean age = 36.91, SD = 6.32, range = 22 – 57) and 605 were fathers (43.3%, mean age = 40.12, SD = 6.61, range = 22-60). 92.2% of mothers and 95.4% of fathers were married. For many of the parents, the highest level of education was high school (37.1% of mothers and 40.7% of fathers). Most of the parents resided in urban areas (94.2% of mothers and 94.1% of fathers). Regarding employment, 28.8% of mothers were currently employed, and 46.2% of them had never been employed. Most of the fathers were currently employed (97.1%).

Table 2.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of parents

	Mothers ($N = 793$)		Fathers ($N = 605$)	
	n	%	n	%
Age	$M = 36.91, SD = 6.32$		$M = 40.12, SD = 6.61$	
Marital Status				
Married	734	92.2	575	95.4
Widowed	17	2.1	8	1.3
Divorced	39	4.9	20	3.3
Living Separately	5	0.6	0	-
Highest Educational Level				
Illiterate	0	-	0	-
Can read and write	11	1.4	1	0.2
Elementary School	187	23.6	107	17.7
Middle School	148	18.7	103	17
High School	294	37.1	246	40.7
2-Year University	79	10	44	7.3
University	67	8.4	91	15
Post-graduate	7	0.9	10	1.7
Residential Area				
Urban	750	94.2	567	94.1
Rural	46	5.8	36	5.9
Employment				
Is employed	229	28.8	585	97.1
Used to be employed	199	25	17	2.8
Has never been employed	367	46.2	1	0.1

2.2 Measurements

2.2.1 Demographic Characteristics Form

Parents were asked to fill out the demographic information form distributed as part of the TÜBİTAK study. Among the demographic variables measured, I used parental age, parental education, parent gender, SES, child age, and child gender in the scope of this study. Both parent and child gender were coded as 1 = male, 2 = female. The parent reports for child age and gender were measured for the child that the parents identified as the target child in mind when responding to the related questions. Parents were asked to report their highest level of education. Their responses were coded into a 1-8 scale (1 = Illiterate, 2 = Can read and write, 3 = Elementary school, 4 = Middle school, 5 = High school, 6 = 2-Year University, 7 = University, 8 = Master's/PHD). Parents also responded to an item asking which step of the ladder they saw themselves on in terms of family income. This variable was used as an indicator of SES, and it ranged from 1 to 10 (1 = lowest SES, 10 =

highest SES).

2.2.2 Parenting Beliefs Scale (PBS)

Parental ethnotheories were assessed using a self-report survey. The Parenting Beliefs Scale was developed by Sümer et al. (2022) within the scope of the TÜBİTAK project in which this master's thesis was conducted. In the qualitative stage of the project, 325 parents and grandparents were interviewed with open-ended questions about their parenting beliefs and socialization goals, which were the two dimensions of ethnotheories that were assessed. The interviews were then coded by considering the cultural relevance of parenting beliefs. Then, a multi-item scale about parenting beliefs was developed and tested in a large pilot study, where a semantic differential assessment method was utilized. In the final stage of the project, in which the current representative sample was used, the scale was revised, and the semantic differential assessment was then replaced by the 25-item Likert-type scale (PBS). The initial factor structure of the PBS was tested in the project's final report (see Sümer et al. 2022). The PBS assesses parents' beliefs about the child's nature, their attributions to their behaviors and emotions, and how they should treat the child. Parents responded to the items using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree). The items consisted of statements about the characteristics and behavior of children (e.g., "A child will relax when they express their anger.", "An ambitious child will be successful. ") and statements about specific parenting behaviors (e.g., "Parents sometimes need to give their children the silent treatment when they upset them.", "Parents should allow their children to make mistakes, so they learn what is right and wrong."). For more details about the scale, Sümer et al. (2022). Psychometric properties of the PBS will be reported in the "Results" section.

2.2.3 The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Child adjustment was evaluated by parents using the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) developed by Goodman (1997). The scale includes five dimensions: conduct problems, emotional symptoms, hyperactivity, peer relationships, and prosocial behavior. Goodman (1997) compared SDQ to a benchmark scale: Rutter Parents' and Teachers' Scales (Elander and Rutter 1996), and found the two scales to be correlated in their common dimensions. SDQ was adopted to Turkish by Guvenir et al. (2008). The items were rated on a 3-point Likert scale (1 = Not True,

2 = Somewhat True, 3 = Certainly True). The items included general statements about the child's mannerisms at home and school (e.g., "My child frequently lies and cheats", "My child cares about others' feelings", "My child has many anxieties and looks very anxious"). The mean Cronbach's alpha value of the total scale was reported to be .73 for the original (Goodman 2001), and .84 for the Turkish version (Guvenir et al. 2008), indicating adequate internal consistency. The validity of SDQ has been shown in several studies, with parent and teacher reports of children of various age groups (e.g., Becker et al. 2004; Klein et al. 2013; Mieloo et al. 2013; Ruffman et al. 2023).

2.3 Data Analysis

SPSS 21 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to conduct the analyses in this study. First, I will report the results of the Principal Components Analyses on the Parenting Beliefs Scale and the SDQ to reduce the dimensions of the items, in order to distinguish different aspects of child adjustment and parenting beliefs. I will also analyze the McDonald's Omega value as an indicator of reliability for each factor. This will be followed by descriptive information about the factors, as well as other variables of interest (e.g., age, parents' education). Information regarding the correlations between each of the factors will also be included. Finally, I will report the results of a hierarchical multiple regression to test the predictive power of parental ethnotheories on child adjustment, controlling for the socio-demographic characteristics. In the first step, only the socio-demographic variables were included, and in the second step, three parental beliefs (negative, positive, and environment shapes the child) were entered to the model to test the unique effects of parenting beliefs above and beyond the socio-demographic variables. Separate regression analyses were conducted for each adjustment outcome.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Factor Structure of the Parental Beliefs Scale

First, Principle Components Analysis (PCA) was used to examine the two main groups of variables, namely parental beliefs and child adjustment (parent reported). Both Varimax Rotation and Promax Rotation were tested in both analyses, and Varimax Rotation was utilized in the final analyses due to low correlations between the obtained factors.

The results of the principal component analysis for parental beliefs were presented in Table 3.1. The results of the PCA indicated that the items of the Parenting Beliefs Scale load onto three separate factors. Three items with factor loadings lower than .30 were removed (Item 1 “A child needs to be left alone to cope with his/her sadness.”, Item 4 “A child needs a good network to become successful.”, and Item 5 “A child acts cute to get what he/she wants.”). With those items removed, the factors in total explained 35.62% of variance. Some items loaded on to multiple factors at once (Items 7, 9, 10, 20, 21). Those items were grouped under the factors based on the item’s highest loading.

Factor 1 indicated parenting beliefs representing mostly neglectful and punitive parenting practices, invalidating the child’s emotional needs, and having an overall negative outlook towards the child’s capacity to improve. The factor constitutes negative beliefs/attributions that the child will not change. The first factor was labelled as “negative beliefs and attributions for child characteristics”, briefly “negative beliefs”. This factor explained 16.28% of the variance and it showed adequate internal consistency ($\Omega = .79$). The second factor reflected parental beliefs on the agency of the child, as well as the parents’ warmth and compassion for the child, as shown by their concerns of their children’s emotional needs.

Table 3.1 Parental ethnotheories factor loadings, explained variances, and reliabilities

Item	Negative	Positive	Environment
1. Nothing will work out no matter what you do for an untalented child.	0.69		
2. No matter what parents do, a child's character will not change.	0.66		
3. A child who expresses sadness will be lonely.	0.65		
4. A child who expresses anger is not liked that much.	0.65		
5. Parents sometimes need to give their children the silent treatment when they upset them.	0.63		
6. A child needs to be left alone to cope with their anger.	0.55		
7. A shy child is mature and well-behaved.	0.51		0.30
8. A shy child will be unsuccessful in life.	0.50		
9. When necessary, parents must punish their children for their good.	0.45	0.30	
10. Children make others do what they want by crying and throwing temper tantrums.	0.44	0.31	
11. A child who expresses their happiness is liked by others.		0.60	
12. A child who is constantly reprimanded will lock others out		0.59	
13. A child will relax when they express their anger.		0.54	
14. Suppressing sadness harms a child.		0.53	
15. Parents should allow their children to make mistakes, so they learn what is right and wrong.		0.50	
16. An ambitious child will be successful.		0.50	
17. Parents who do not intervene in their child's life in time will regret it later on.			0.66
18. For a child to be good, they must be raised according to religious beliefs.			0.65
19. The child does whatever s/he sees from parents.			0.56
20. The only way a child can become successful is through education.		0.37	0.43
21. Showing too much love will spoil the child.	0.31		0.40
22. Technology usage (cellphone, tablet, computer) negatively affects the child.	0.20		0.38
Eigenvalue	3.58	2.26	2.00
Variance Explained	16.28%	10.25%	9.09%
Omega	0.79	0.60	0.58

The second factor was labeled as “positive beliefs about the child’s nature”, briefly “positive beliefs”. This factor explained 10.25% of the variance, and its internal consistency coefficient (Omega) was .60. The third factor consisted of statements that emphasize the role of the environment in raising the child. It constitutes beliefs that the environment can change the child. The third factor was labeled as “env. shapes the child”. The third factor explained 9.09% of the variance and had a relatively poorer internal consistency (Omega = .58) due to only a few number of items being in this factor. The results of the principal components analysis did not change according to parent gender.

3.2 Factor Structure of the SDQ Scale

Next, the results of the principal component analysis for child adjustment are shown and discussed (Table 3.2). The items were loaded into four factors in the scree plot. However, two of the factors had relatively low eigenvalues, and they each had a low number of items, part of which were shared with the two factors with higher eigenvalues. Therefore, the number of factors in this analysis was limited to 2. In the final two-factor model, the total variance explained was 29.72%. One item (Item 5) loaded on to multiple factors at once. That item was grouped under the factor on which it had the higher loading.

The first factor seemed to indicate the child’s externalizing and internalizing behaviors, with items such as “Often fights with other children or bullies them”, “Often lies or cheats”, and “Many worries, often seems worried”. This factor was labeled as “Problem Behaviors”. This factor explained 18.65% of the variance, and it showed good internal consistency (Omega = .80). The second factor seemed to lean towards good manners and helpfulness, with items such as “Helpful if someone is hurt, upset, or feeling ill” and “Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils, etc.)”. This factor was labeled as “Prosocial Behaviors”. The factor explained 11.06% of the variance, and it showed questionable internal consistency (Omega = .63).

Table 3.2 Sdq factor loadings, explained variances, and reliabilities

Item	Problem Behaviors	Prosocial Behaviors
1. Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful.	0.63	
2. Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers.	0.62	
3. Many worries, often seems worried.	0.61	
4. Often fights with other children or bullies them.	0.60	
5. Often lies or cheats.	0.59	
6. Steals from home, school or elsewhere.	0.58	
7. Picked on or bullied by other children.	0.57	
8. Many fears, easily scared.	0.54	
9. Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness.	0.54	
10. Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence.	0.44	
11. Constantly fidgeting or squirming	0.44	
12. Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long.	0.43	
13. Easily distracted, concentration wanders.	0.40	
14. Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children).		0.60
15. Kind to younger children.		0.58
16. Thinks things out before acting		0.54
17. Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill.		0.53
18. Generally obedient, usually does what adults request.		0.51
19. Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils, etc.).		0.50
20. Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span.		0.49
21. Considerate of other people's feelings.		0.37
Eigenvalue	4.44	1.18
Variance Explained	18.65%	11.06%
Omega	0.80	0.63

3.3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between the Major Variables

Next, as presented in Table 3.3, the descriptive statistics of the major variables and the Pearson's r correlations between them were computed. SES ranged from 1 to 10 and Parent Education ranged from 1 to 7. Gender was coded as 1 = male and 2 = female. The parents were mostly middle-aged ($M = 38.30$, $SD = 6.64$). The target children were mostly in early to middle childhood ($M = 9.61$, $SD = 4.13$). The average SES parents reported was close to the middle of the ladder ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 2.08$), indicating that the sample represents mostly lower/middle class participants.

The mean score for negative parenting beliefs ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.88$) was observed to be relatively lower than that of positive parenting beliefs ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.79$) and beliefs that the environment shapes the child ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.81$). To see if the observed differences between parenting beliefs were significant, t -tests were used to compare their means. Overall, in Turkey, positive beliefs were significantly higher than negative beliefs ($t(1339) = 26.69$, $p < .01$); and beliefs that the environment shapes the child were also higher than negative beliefs ($t(1331) = 27.07$, $p < .01$). Parents also reported more positive beliefs than beliefs that the environment shapes the child ($t(1335) = 3.12$, $p < .01$), although this difference seemed minor. A difference of means was also observed between prosocial behaviors ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.37$) and problem behaviors ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 0.39$). A separate t -test was used to check whether the difference between prosocial and problem behaviors was significant. Overall, in Turkey, parents reported higher engagement in prosocial behaviors than problem behaviors for their children ($t(1268) = 29.80$, $p < .01$). All the correlations within and between parenting beliefs and adjustment factors were significant. Most notably, there was a strong positive correlation between negative beliefs and problem behaviors ($r = .40$); a moderate negative correlation between prosocial behaviors and problem behaviors ($r = -.34$); and between problem behaviors and positive beliefs ($r = -.30$).

3.4 Gender Differences

Next, the effects of parent gender and child gender on parental ethnotheories and child adjustment were tested. It was tested 1) whether mothers and fathers varied in their parenting beliefs and in their reports of children's prosocial and problem behaviors, and 2) whether the mothers and fathers varied in these reports when

Table 3.3 Correlations among extracted factors

	<i>M/%</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Parent Age	38.30	6.64											
2. Parent Gender	56.7%		-.24										
3. SES	5.39	2.08	.43	-.76									
4. Parent Education	4.72	1.30	-	-.11	.16**								
5. Child Age	9.61	4.13	.57**	-.05	-	-							
6. Child Gender	51.9%		.03	-.10	.06*	.18**							
7. Positive Beliefs	4.08	0.79	.04	.02	-	-.05	.03	-.01					
8. Negative Beliefs	3.24	0.88	-.05	.05	-	-	.03	-.02	.07*				
9. Env. Shapes the Child	4.01	0.81	.06*	.01	-	-	.04	.01	.28**	.27**			
10. Problem Behaviors	1.67	0.39	-.05	.00	-	-.05	-.01	-.03	-	.40**	-		
11. Prosocial Behaviors	2.20	0.37	.10**	-	-	.00	.15**	.03	.22**	-	.14**	-	
				0.01	.19**					.24**		.34**	

Note: Gender: 1= Male, 2= Female

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

reporting for their sons vs. their daughters. For this purpose, a series of 2x2 (parent gender; child gender) Univariate ANOVAs were run separately for 5 dependent variables (i.e., positive beliefs, negative beliefs, env. shapes the child, problem behaviors, and prosocial behaviors). The main effect of parent gender on negative beliefs was marginally significant ($F(1, 1350) = 3.52, p = .06$). Investigation of the group means revealed that on average, mothers reported more negative parenting beliefs than fathers. The interaction effect of parent gender and child gender on problem behaviors was also significant ($F(1, 1321) = 5.77, p = .02$). Investigation of the group means showed that fathers reported more problem behaviors for girls than they did for boys. Furthermore, mothers reported problem behaviors about equally for girls and boys. The rest of the effects in the analyses were not significant.

3.5 Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Parental Beliefs Predicting Child Adjustment

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the power of parental beliefs in predicting child adjustment. For this purpose, two separate analyses were conducted for the two dependent variables: problem behaviors and prosocial behaviors. In both analyses, the procedure was as follows: first the demographic variables were entered as part of the first block and parental beliefs were added in the second step. This allowed testing whether parenting beliefs predicted child adjustment above and beyond the effects of the socio-demographic variables. The results for both regression analyses are shown in Table 3.4.

The dependent variable in the first regression analysis was problem behaviors, and the dependent variable in the second one was prosocial behaviors. The variables in the first step were parent age, parent gender, parent education level, SES, child age, and child gender. In the second step of the regression analyses, the three factors that correspond to parental beliefs (i.e., negative beliefs, positive beliefs, and env. shapes the child) were entered. The regression coefficients for each variable and other relevant statistics are also shown in Table 3.4.

In the regression analysis of problem behaviors (Table 3.4), the first model only accounted for 1% of the variance, whereas the second model accounted for 28% of the variance. These results indicate that parenting beliefs were significant predictors of problem behaviors, even when socio-demographic variables were accounted for. More specifically, negative beliefs positively predicted problem behaviors, whereas positive beliefs and beliefs that environment shapes the child negatively predicted

Table 3.4 Regression results predicting prosocial and problem behaviors

Problem Behaviors			
	B	SE	<i>B</i>
Step 1			
SES	-0.02 (-0.03, -0.01)	0.01	-.10**
Education	-0.01 (-0.03, 0.01)	0.01	-.04
Child Age	0.00 (-0.01, 0.01)	0.00	.00
Child Gender	-0.02 (-0.04, 0.01)	0.01	-.04
Parent Age	0.00 (-0.01, 0.01)	0.00	-.05
Parent Gender	0.01 (-0.02, 0.03)	0.01	.02
R ²		0.01	
ΔR ²		0.01	
Step 2			
SES	-0.02 (-0.03, -0.01)	0.01	-.08**
Education	0.00 (-0.02, 0.02)	0.01	.00
Child Age	0.00 (-0.01, 0.01)	0.00	-.03
Child Gender	-0.01 (-0.03, 0.01)	0.01	-.03
Parent Age	0.00 (-0.01, 0.01)	0.00	.02
Parent Gender	0.01 (-0.01, 0.03)	0.01	.02
Negative Beliefs	0.19 (0.17, 0.22)	0.01	.44**
Positive Beliefs	-0.15 (-0.18, -0.13)	0.01	-.31**
Env. Shapes the Child	-0.06 (-0.08, -0.03)	0.01	-.16**
R ²		0.28	
ΔR ²		0.27	
Prosocial Behaviors			
	B	SE	<i>B</i>
Step 1			
SES	-0.03 (-0.04, -0.02)	0.01	-.19**
Education	0.02 (0.01, 0.04)	0.01	.07*
Child Age	0.01 (0.01, 0.02)	0.00	.14**
Child Gender	0.01 (-0.01, 0.04)	0.01	.04
Parent Age	0.00 (-0.01, 0.01)	0.00	.04
Parent Gender	-0.01 (-0.03, 0.01)	0.01	-.02
R ²		0.06	
ΔR ²		0.06	
Step 2			
SES	-0.03 (-0.04, -0.02)	0.01	-.19**
Education	0.02 (0, 0.03)	0.01	.06*
Child Age	0.01 (0.01, 0.02)	0.00	.16**
Child Gender	0.01 (-0.01, 0.03)	0.01	.03
Parent Age	0.00 (-0.01, 0.01)	0.00	-.01
Parent Gender	-0.01 (-0.03, 0.01)	0.01	-.02
Negative Beliefs	-0.13 (-0.15, -0.10)	0.01	-.30**
Positive Beliefs	0.08 (0.08, 0.11)	0.01	.18**
Env. Shapes the Child	0.07 (0.05, 0.10)	0.01	.16**
R ²		0.19	
ΔR ²		0.13	

Note: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

problem behaviors. SES was found to be significant in both models, indicating that parents from relatively higher SES backgrounds reported less problem behaviors for their children.

In the regression analysis of prosocial behaviors (Table 3.4), the first model only accounted for 6% of the variance, whereas the second model accounted for 19% of the variance. The results revealed multiple socio-demographic variables to be significant predictors of prosocial behaviors in both models. SES negatively predicted prosocial behaviors, indicating that parents with relatively higher SES backgrounds reported less prosocial behaviors for their children. Education positively predicted prosocial behaviors, indicating parents with higher educational attainment reported more prosocial behaviors for their children. Child age also positively predicted prosocial behaviors, in that older children were reported to engage in prosocial behaviors more often. In the second model, the three types of parenting beliefs significantly predicted prosocial behaviors above and beyond the effects of the socio-demographic variables. Specifically, negative beliefs negatively predicted prosocial behaviors, whereas positive beliefs and beliefs that environment shapes the child positively predicted prosocial behaviors.

The data was analyzed once again to investigate whether the regression results differed across parent genders. The results showed that there were a few notable differences in the regression results based on parent gender. With problem behaviors as the outcome, the total variance explained was 32.8% for fathers and 27.3% for mothers. The significance of the results remained similar to that of the total combined sample, with some notable exceptions. For fathers, SES did not significantly predict problem behaviors, and Education had a marginally significant main effect in the second model ($B = -.02$, $B = -.07$, $p = .06$). The significance of the results of problem behaviors for mothers remained consistent with the total sample. With prosocial behaviors as the outcome, the total variance explained was 18.8% for fathers and 25.8% for mothers. For fathers, the results remained consistent with the analysis of the total sample. For mothers, one noteworthy difference emerged in that education did not significantly predict prosocial behaviors.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 General Discussion

The literature on parenting has accumulated many revelations in regard to culturally influenced parenting beliefs. Studies on parental ethnotheories are relatively scarce compared to studies on parenting behaviors and practices. However, parental ethnotheories reveal crucial insights into the driving factors of parenting practices. As such, it is relevant to have a better comprehension of how parental ethnotheories influence outcomes on children. As an important aspect for children's health and well-being, and as a factor that is bi-directionally associated with parenting practices (e.g., Yan and Ansari 2016), child adjustment is one such outcome that is worth investigating. Accordingly, this study aimed to address the gap in the literature on the link between parental ethnotheories and child adjustment. The results of this study will be discussed in relation to the relevant literature in the following section.

4.2 Major Findings of the Study

The main finding of the study was that parental ethnotheories were all linked to both adjustment outcomes: prosocial behaviors and problem behaviors. Negative parental beliefs predicted fewer prosocial behaviors and more problem behaviors. In contrast to negative beliefs, positive beliefs and beliefs that the environment shapes the child predicted more prosocial behaviors and less problem behaviors. These findings may be intuitive, although prior to this study, the link between these factors had not received much attention in the literature. Bornstein, Putnick, and Suwalsky (2018) also found that mothers' parenting cognitions of their knowledge of child-rearing, their parenting satisfactions, and their internal attributions of parenting success all predicted supportive parenting practices, which in turn led to less problem

behaviors displayed by their children. Although the conceptualization of parental beliefs and cognitions do not align exactly, both the findings of this study and that of theirs may point towards a similar conclusion: that problem behaviors displayed by children is, to an extent, regulated by their parents' thoughts and beliefs about parenting and child-rearing.

The impact of parents' beliefs on child adjustment, although shown to be significant in the results of this study, likely does not only constitute a direct effect. Considering the nature of the association between parenting beliefs and their potential impact on the child, variables that serve to connect those constructs would also need to be considered. It is assumed that parenting practices and behaviors may serve as the mediators between the two. A hypothetical illustration could be that parents having more negative and less positive beliefs about their children, as well as not believing that children can change, tend to deploy more harsh or neglectful parenting practices, which then lead their children to display more adjustment problems. This general illustration would likely require more factors such as child temperament and emotion regulation to be considered. For instance, children with higher negative affectivity had more externalizing symptoms resulting from punitive parenting practices (Zubizarreta, Calvete, and Hankin 2019). Similarly, the negative effects of parenting on the child can impact the child more strongly if the child has low effortful control, and high impulsivity and frustration (Kiff, Lengua, and Zalewski 2011). Parents' beliefs about child temperament may reveal insights in the given associations and would help reveal the bigger picture of the parent-child dynamic.

In consideration of the factors that may play a role in the parenting beliefs-child adjustment link, emotion regulation may be a relevant key variable that is proximal to both parenting beliefs and child adjustment. Beliefs about the goodness and controllability of emotions can influence emotional expression and emotion regulation, which may in turn affect more general, long-term outcomes such as well-being (Ford and Gross 2019). While this argument holds in the context of the same individual's emotion beliefs affecting their own outcomes, the same could also be true in the context of parental beliefs affecting child outcomes. The Parental Beliefs Scale (Sümer et al. 2022) used in this study included various items which assessed parents' beliefs about the child's emotion regulation and emotional expressions (e.g., Item 3: "A child who expresses sadness will be lonely."; Item 6: "A child needs to be left alone to cope with their anger."). These beliefs about the child's emotions would likely manifest in parents' attitudes and reactions towards children's emotional expression, which in turn could impact children's well-being and adjustment. Indeed, the negative beliefs as a factor included generally negative and invalidating statements towards child's emotional expression (e.g., Item 4: "A child who expresses anger is

not liked that much”), and this factor predicted more problem behaviors and less prosocial behaviors for their children. On the other side of the argument, the positive beliefs factor included statements that validated the child’s emotions, and an overall positive outlook towards their free emotional expression (e.g., Item 11: “A child who expresses their happiness is liked by others.”; Item 13: “A child will relax when they express their anger.”). Perhaps as a consequence of this, positive beliefs of parents predicted fewer problem behaviors and more prosocial behaviors for their children.

Beyond parents’ beliefs about emotions, parents may also attempt to guide their children’s emotional expressions. As such, parents may use a socialization practice categorized as emotional coaching, which concerns not only how parents react to and guide their children’s emotions, but also requires an awareness about emotions in general, as well as the ways in which negative emotions such as sadness can be regulated. In a longitudinal study, Gottman and Hooven (1996) found that among children from the United States, those with parents that had an emotional coaching philosophy had fewer problem behaviors and better physiological regulation 3 years later. This may show that parents’ beliefs and awareness of emotions, as well as their own capacity to communicate about and regulate emotions, are reflected in their children’s emotional problems and consequent problem behaviors. In light of the importance of parents’ belief about emotions and emotional coaching, the results of this study likely require further inspection in order to have a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms within the parental beliefs-child adjustment link.

To understand how parenting beliefs impact child adjustment, parents’ capacity for parental reflective functioning can be an important factor to consider. Parental reflective functioning, much like parental ethnotheories, may guide parenting behavior, and consequently influence child outcomes. A study found that the more parents have this capacity, the less defense mechanisms their infants displayed in the Strange Situation, consequently having lower attachment anxiety (Fonagy et al. 1991). Another study investigated whether parental reflective functioning would mediate the relationship between attachment of parents and that of children, comparing samples from Poland, the Netherlands, and Turkey (Sümer et al. in press). Their findings showed that an aspect of parental reflective functioning, namely prementalizing, mediated the effects of parents’ own attachment security on the child’s attachment security, and this effect was particularly strong for Polish and Turkish mothers. A similar mechanism of parental reflective functioning, particularly one that links parental beliefs and child adjustment, may also exist. Given that there is a significant correlation between children’s attachment security and problem behaviors (Buist and Aken 2004; Laible, Carlo, and Raffaelli 2000), parental reflective

functioning could connect the pathway from parents' beliefs to child adjustment, similar to how it connects parent attachment to child attachment. Parenting beliefs can reflect how parents make attributions to the child's psychology and behavior, and the valence of such attributions is, at least in part, determined by the parents' capacity for mentalizing the child's internal states. Taken together, speculations can be made on the presence of various mechanisms between the interrelated constructs of parental reflective functioning and parenting beliefs, and how these constructs affect children's adjustment outcomes. One possible speculation is that positive parenting beliefs and parenting beliefs regarding the influence of the environment in shaping the child could predict a higher capacity of parental reflective functioning, which would in turn predict fewer problem behaviors and more prosocial behaviors for their children. Similarly, negative parenting beliefs might predict less capacity for parental reflective functioning, consequently predicting more problem behaviors and fewer prosocial behaviors.

The current study's results showed that parents tended to report less negative parenting beliefs than the other two types of beliefs, and they also reported fewer problem behaviors of children than they did prosocial behaviors. This may point towards a potential bias in parents' reports. A study with parents of 4- to 11-year-olds in the United States showed that parents may in fact be subject to a positivity bias, particularly when reporting about their children's emotional states (Lagattuta, Sayfan, and Bamford 2012). This may also be the case with the present study, given the scales that measured parenting beliefs and child adjustment contained statements about children's emotional states. It is also worthy of note that despite parents reporting less negative parenting beliefs, the predictive power of negative parenting beliefs was significantly higher than that of positive beliefs and beliefs that the environment shapes the child. Considering the factor structures, the negative parenting beliefs factor contained more items (i.e., 10 items for negative beliefs, 6 items each for positive beliefs and env. shapes the child); had better internal consistency ($\alpha = .79$ versus $\alpha = .60$ and $\alpha = .58$) and individually explained a greater portion of the variance (i.e., 16.28% versus 10.25% and 9.09%) than the other two factors. This may indicate that negative parenting beliefs was a clearer and more consistent variable than the other two types of parenting beliefs measured in this study. Taken together, this could explain the effect size of negative parenting beliefs being higher than the other two parenting beliefs.

The analyses in this study included various socio-demographic variables of parents, as well as their children. Among those variables, SES seemed to be the most influential. Parents from higher SES backgrounds reported less problem behaviors and less prosocial behaviors for their children. The negative association that was

found between SES and problem behaviors is in line with the findings of another study (Anderson et al. 2022). They found that both internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors were less common among high SES families. The negative association between SES and prosocial behaviors was rather surprising. This result likely contradicts the findings of Benenson, Pascoe, and Radmore (2007), in that children from higher SES backgrounds were reported to behave more altruistically in an economic game. The likely divergence between the findings of this study and that of Benenson, Pascoe, and Radmore (2007) may lie in the difference of our assessment methods. While they directly measured children's altruistic behavior, this study utilized a parent-report for that purpose. This may point towards a potential bias among the participants in this study, particularly involving parents from high SES backgrounds underestimating or understating their children's prosocial behaviors.

Parents' education level influenced prosocial behaviors, in that parents with higher educational attainment reported more prosocial behaviors for their children. This is consistent with findings demonstrating the positive association between education level and prosocial behavior (e.g., Bekkers and Graaf 2006; Mesch et al. 2006). High educational attainment, but not necessarily high SES, is likely associated with parents' own engagement in prosocial behaviors (e.g., Westlake, Coall, and Grueter 2019). Parents' prosocial behaviors, through parental influence, may translate into their children displaying prosocial behaviors as well. Parent age was not a significant predictor in any of the models, which shows that despite the large age gap between the participants in the study, old and young parents reported similar levels of prosocial and problem behaviors for their children. The results of this study also indicated that older children were associated with more prosocial behaviors. This finding may not be surprising, given the extent of research supporting this link (e.g., Benenson, Pascoe, and Radmore 2007; Blake et al. 2015; Fabes and Eisenberg 1998). A Theory of Mind (ToM) perspective might bring an explanation for this association. Prosocial behavior is facilitated by the ToM development among children (Takagishi et al. 2010). As age progresses the ToM development, the increase in prosocial behavior with age can also be expected.

The investigation into the effects of gender on ethnotheories and adjustment revealed intriguing findings. The results showed that mothers on average had more negative parenting beliefs than fathers. This difference might emerge from certain gender differences in parenting. One argument could be made regarding perceived parental involvement. Accordingly, mothers feel a higher degree of parental involvement than fathers (García-Mendoza et al. 2022; Ratelle et al. 2005). Coupled with the notion that mothers generally have more responsibilities over their children, it could be argued that mothers might have a more accurate sense of their children's

characteristics and capabilities. If so, this could also explain why mothers have more negative beliefs about their children's development. Surprisingly, the results also show that fathers reported more problem behaviors for their daughters than they did for their sons. This may be a unique result, given the lack of findings with the indication that fathers perceived more problem behaviors from their daughters. It can be speculated that fathers may have a certain bias when evaluating their daughters' behaviors. This bias may result from the distinct dynamics between parents and children based on sex. In various cultures across the world, girls are often monitored more closely by their parents than boys, and boys are often given more independence. Furthermore, mothers and fathers may also differ based on how they treat their sons and daughters differently. For instance, a study with parents of preschoolers from the United States found that fathers monitored their daughters more closely than their sons during a risky climbing activity, whereas mothers did not show such difference between monitoring their sons and daughters (Hagan and Kuebli 2007). This may serve as an indicator that fathers may tend to attribute a higher degree of autonomy to their sons, and in contrast, they may tend to perceive their daughters as more interdependent and in need of their support and help. Perhaps this general attributional pattern may have led fathers to report more problem behaviors for their daughters.

4.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

One of the limitations of this study is that child adjustment was reported by parents, suggesting a common-method variance problem. The analyzed sample in the study consisted only of parents, and no data from teachers or the children themselves were collected. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that the results of the study, at least to some extent, may be subject to common method variance. Parent reports have been utilized in research about parental ethnotheories (e.g., Kapisız and Sieben 2022), and the convergence between parent reports and child self-reports have been advocated in previous studies (e.g., Ebert 2017; Miller et al. 2017). Even so, given that this study tested the association between parent-level variables and child-level outcomes, both variables and outcomes being reported by parents remains a notable limitation.

The principal components analysis for the SDQ revealed two factors in this study, despite there being 5 dimensions in the original scale (i.e., Goodman 1997). The categorization of adjustment outcomes in two broad categories may elicit ambigu-

ity regarding the associations amongst variables. More particularly, it is unclear whether parenting beliefs significantly predicted internalizing behaviors, externalizing behaviors, or both. This ambiguity remains as a limitation.

Another limitation of the study is the cross-sectional design. Due to the nature of its cross-sectional research method, the results of this study do not imply causation. Although there was a significant association between parenting beliefs and child adjustment, inference cannot be made regarding the direction of the effect. In the study of Bornstein, Putnick, and Suwalsky (2018), a longitudinal design was utilized, where the parenting cognitions influenced adjustment through the mediation effect of parenting practices. The direction of effect could be similar, in principle, for the parenting beliefs-adjustment link, which would mean that parenting beliefs affect child adjustment. However, the findings of this study cannot serve to support this claim.

Finally, it is worthy of note that the age range for the sample's target children (of which parents reported adjustment for) is fairly large, including children from 4 to 17 years of age. Given that children may show significant differences across their developmental stages, their adjustment outcomes may also be too variable across different age groups. This may especially hold true for prosocial behaviors, since older children tend to engage in prosocial behaviors more often, as reflected by the findings in this study. There could be merit in dividing such dataset based on certain age groups (e.g., early childhood, middle-late childhood, adolescence) for conducting similar analyses. This way, how parental beliefs predict adjustment outcomes specifically across different age groups could be observed.

Future studies could further investigate the potential mediating links between parental ethnotheories and adjustment. Studies focusing on cultural comparisons, as well as studies using culturally representative samples from other geographies would be particularly invaluable, in order to establish a more comprehensive picture of the association. In order to further our understanding of the patterns of cultural beliefs about parenting and child development, scholars could use the emic approach to explore the culture-specific characteristics of parenting beliefs. The potential insight from such studies would make the parental ethnotheory-child adjustment link more discernible. My intention, however, is not to understate the importance of cross-cultural comparisons, as they help us unravel not only cultural variation, but also normative patterns of parenting beliefs across cultures. This, perhaps, is especially important in the larger discussion of the concept of universally optimal parenting. The prospect of identifying potential universally normative parenting beliefs, as well as socio-ecological variables that may influence these beliefs, could

have great implications for children's development and well-being.

Further research is also needed to test the effects of parental ethnotheories on other child-level outcomes. This endeavor would bring valuable insights into the field, given that outcomes on the level of children have rather been overlooked in the discussion of parental ethnotheories. Variables that indicate children's health and well-being, as well as cognitive and social development should especially be considered. In terms of data collection methods, self-reports by children could be particularly effective, coupled with parents' self-reports of parental ethnotheories. This would reduce common method variance, and potentially give further insights into the parent-child dynamic. Finally, looking into the long-term influences of parental ethnotheories and child adjustment may be a promising route. As longitudinal studies can be used to investigate the potential causal relationship between parental ethnotheories and adjustment, it could also attempt to reveal whether there is a bi-directional association between the two variables.

4.4 Contributions of the Study

This study is among the first to address the association between parental ethnotheories and adjustment. The findings show that parental beliefs as the core aspects of ethnotheories are significant predictors of both problem behaviors and prosocial behaviors of children, above and beyond socio-demographical variables. The findings also emphasize the influence of certain variables such as SES and parental education on child adjustment. A potentially unique effect was found regarding the interaction between parent and child gender, showing that fathers reported more problem behaviors for their daughters than they did for their sons. Accordingly, this study may also contribute to the research of individual differences based on socio-demographical variables. Data focusing extensively on cultural parenting beliefs in Turkey was utilized in this study. As a culturally representative sample from Turkey was used, I believe this study bares insights into the cultural characteristics of Turkish families.

4.5 Conclusion

This study aimed to address the gap in the literature regarding the missing link between parental ethnotheories and child adjustment. A representative sample of Turkish mothers and fathers collected in a large TÜBİTAK supported project was used to assess how their different parenting beliefs, influenced by culture, predicted their children's adjustment. The findings reflect various associations between socio-demographic variables, ethnotheories and adjustment. Parental ethnotheories are critical factors of child development, shown by their influence over children's adjustment outcomes. Thus, parental ethnotheories as the cultural sources of parental behaviors and practices require careful consideration for optimal child development.

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APPENDIX A

A.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants

1. Cinsiyet: Kadın/Erkek

2. Doğum yılınız:

3. Medeni durum:

Bekar

Dul

Boşanmış

Ayrı yaşıyor

4. Yerleşim türü:

Metropol

Metropol dışı

5. En son mezun olduğunuz okulu öğrenebilir miyim?:

Okuma yazma bilmiyor

Okul mezunu değil, okuma yazma biliyor

İlkokul mezunu

Ortaokul (veya ilköğretim okulu) mezunu

Lise veya dengi okul mezunu

Yüksek okul (2 yıllık) mezunu

Üniversite (en az 4 yıllık) mezunu

Yüksek lisans veya doktora mezunu

6. Çalışma durumu:

Çalışıyor

Geçmişte çalışmış

— Hiç çalışmamış

7. Siz kendinizi merdivenin hangi basamağında görüyorsunuz? (1 = en düşük konumdaki insanlar, 10 = en iyi konumdaki insanlar)

8. Çocuğun yaşı:

9. Çocuğun cinsiyeti: Kızı/Oğlu

APPENDIX B

B.1 Parenting Beliefs Scale (PBS)

Şimdi size, ülkemizde çocuk yetiştirme konusunda kişiden kişiye değişen bazı yaygın inanışları okuyacağım. Bu çocuk yetiştirme inanışlarına ne oranda katıldığınızı öğrenmek istiyoruz. Lütfen göstereceğim bu cetvele göre yanıtlayın

___ 1- Hiç katılmıyorum
___ 6- Tamamen katılıyorum

1. Üzüntüsüyle baş etmesi için çocuğu kendi haline bırakmak gerekir.
2. Zamanında çocuğuna karışmayan anne ve baba sonrasında pişman olur.
3. Çocuk anne babadan gördüğünü yapar.
4. Çocuğun iyi bir yere gelmesi için çevresinin geniş olması gerekir
5. Çocuklar sevimli davranarak istediklerini yaptırırlar.
6. Teknoloji kullanımı (telefon, tablet, bilgisayar) çocuğu olumsuz etkiler.
7. Üzüntüsünü içine atması çocuğa zarar verir.
8. Çocuk anne babayı üzdüğünde bazen küsmek gerekir.
9. Öfkesini ifade eden çocuk pek sevilmez.
10. Mutluluğunu gösteren çocuk başkaları tarafından sevilir.
11. Kızgınlığıyla baş etmesi için çocuğu kendi haline bırakmak gerekir.
12. Çekingen çocuk ağırbaşlı, terbiyeli olur.
13. Hayırlı evlat olması için çocuğun dini inançlara göre yetiştirilmesi gerekir.
14. Utangaç çocuk hayatta başarısız olur.
15. Çocuğun iyiliği için gerektiğinde anne baba ceza vermelidir.
16. Yeteneği olmayan çocuğa ne yapılırsa işe yaramaz.

17. Srekli kzlan ocuk kendini diđerlerine evresine kapatır.
18. ocuđun ykselmesinin tek yolu iyi bir eđitim almasıdır.
19. ok sevgi gstermek ocuđu şımartır.
20. Anne baba ne yaparsa yapsın ocuđun karakteri deđiřmez.
21. zntsn gsteren ocuk yalnız kalır.
22. Dođruyu ve yanlıřı đrenebilmesi iin ebeveyn ocuđunun hata yapmasına izin vermelidir.
23. Hırslı ocuk bařarılı olur.
24. fkelerini ifade eden ocuk rahatlar.
25. ocuklar ađlayarak, fke nbetine girerek istediklerini yaptırır.

APPENDIX C

C.1 The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Şimdi çocuğunuzun son 6 ay içindeki davranışlarını göz önüne alarak, okuyacağım her bir ifadeyi değerlendirmenizi isteyeceğim. "Doğru değil mi", "kısmen mi doğru" yoksa "tamamen mi doğru"?

- ___ 1- Doğru değil
___ 3- Tamamen doğru

1. Diğer insanların duygularını önemser.
2. Huzursuz ve aşırı hareketlidir.
3. Sıkça baş ağrısı, karın ağrısı ve bulantı şikayetleri olur.
4. Diğer çocuklarla paylaşır (yiyecek, oyuncak, vs.).
5. Sıkça öfke nöbetleri olur ya da aşırı sinirlidir.
6. Genellikle söz dinler, büyüklerin isteklerini yapar.
7. Birçok kaygısı vardır, sıkça endişeli görünür.
8. Kendini kötü hisseden birine yardımcı olur.
9. Sürekli elleri ayakları kıpır kıpırdır ya da oturduğu yerde kıpırdanıp durur.
10. Sıkça diğer çocuklarla kavga eder ya da onlarla alay eder.
11. Sıkça mutsuz, üzgün ya da ağlamaklıdır.
12. Dikkati kolayca dağılır, dikkatini toplamakta güçlük çeker.
13. Yeni ortamlarda gergin ya da huysuzdur. Kendine güvenini kolayca kaybeder.
14. Kendinden küçüklere iyi davranır.
15. Sıkça yalan söyler ya da hile yapar.
16. Diğer çocuklar onunla uğraşırlar ya da onunla alay ederler.

17. Sıkça başkalarına (anne baba, öğretmen, diğer çocuklar) yardım etmeye istekli olur.
18. Bir şeyi yapmadan önce düşünür.
19. Ev, okul ya da başka yerlerden bazı şeyleri aşırır.
20. Pek çok korkusu vardır, kolayca ürker.
21. Başladığı işi bitirir, dikkat süresi iyidir.