

Summary

Emotion Socialization's Contribution to Variance of Children's Observed Behavior Problems

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It is known that dysfunctional interactions between mother and child is associated with children's observed behavior problems (Garner, Dansmore, & Southam-Gerrow, 2007; Havighurst, Wilson, Harley, Prior, & Kehoe, 2010; Özbaran & Aydın, 2007; Yağmurlu & Altan, 2010). Eisenberg and his colleagues (1999) underlined that especially mothers' reactions' quality in relation to their children's emotions had a significant role on this association; so, "emotion socialization" which is considered as a new concept for national literature is under debate in this context. Emotion socialization is described as parents' reactions and communication styles that they show while their children experience negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, worry or sadness (Eisenberg et al., 1999). According to Kılıç (2014), emotion socialization process is shaped based on some dominant parental behaviors such as modeling, coaching, contingency and encouraging children to express their emotions.

Parental attitudes which support children's emotional potential help children to understand and interpret their own emotions appropriate to the situation, model and lead children to create a safe emotional environment, and finally appreciate children's emotion regulation efforts. These are accepted as positive emotion socialization approaches that contribute to the children's emotional and behavioral development (Eisenberg et al., 1999; Garner, Dansmore, & Southam-Gerrow, 2007; Gottman et al., 1996; Yağmurlu & Altan, 2010). On the other hand, attitudes and reactions such as punishing, underestimation, and contempt or neglect are negative emotion socialization approaches; and in contrast to positive emotion socialization approaches, these attitudes are seen as not supportive and encouraging expression of emotions. Plus, they are not focused on the emotion or the situation which uncover the emotion (Warren & Stifter, 2007; Yağmurlu & Altan, 2010). However, negative emotion socialization approaches lead children to learn about clues, which helps them to control their emotions, to be blocked by suppressing emotions (Garner, Dansmore, & Southam-Gerrow, 2007; Güven & Erden, 2013; McElwin, Halberstadt, & Volling, 2007).

Quality of emotion socialization affects some familial risk factors (and also their severity) such as low income, low parental education level, frequent and intense familial conflict (including physical and verbal violence) (Shaffer, Suveg, Thomassin, & Bradbury, 2012). In this context, it can be considered that frequent and intense familial conflict increased the frequency of negative parental emotion socialization reactions. Indeed, Fauber, Forehand, Thomas and Wierson (1990) emphasized that frequent and intense marital conflicts contributed to the children's behavior problems by affecting husband and wife's emotion regulation skills negatively. However, risk of children's behavior problems is increased by being exposed to frequent and intense parental or marital conflict, and determining factor for these conflicts' effects on children is considered as children's perceptions about parental or marital conflicts (Cummings, Goeke-Morey, Papp, & Dulkewich, 2007; Davies & Lindsay, 2004; Grych, 2005). Grych and Fincham (1990) define these perceptions by grounding three basics which are threat, coping and self-blame. In addition, types of children's observed behavior problems are considered to change according to dominant marital conflict perception of the children. In research conducted in Turkey, it has been found that while children's self-blame perceptions about marital conflicts increase, observed externalizing behavior problems such as attention deficit, hyperactivity or conduct disorder also tend to increase (Peksaygılı & Güre, 2008; Sakız, 2011).

The aim of this study is to assess the contribution of emotion socialization concept ranked as a new variable for Turkish literature to children's observed behavior problems by exploring aforementioned variables considered mostly as dual associations so far. In this context, mediating role of negative maternal emotion socialization on the relationships between children's observed behavior problems, mothers' education status and self-blame appraisals about parental conflict was tested.

Method

Participants

In total, 267 (138 girls and 127 boys) children aged between 9 and 13 years olds ($M = 10.75$, $SD = .86$) who have educated in Turkish primary and secondary schools (two private and four public schools), their mothers ($M = 37.61$, $SD = 5.33$) and their teachers are participated in the study, voluntarily.

Measures

A demographic data form, Conners' Parent and Teacher Rating Scales' Short Forms, self-blame sub-scale of Children's Perception of Marital Conflict Inventory and negative sub-scales of Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale were used to collect data in the present study.

Procedure

School approval, children's and their mothers' willingness to participate and parental informed consent were obtained before participation in the study. Both children's and mothers' participation were voluntary. Children filled questionnaires in their classroom during regular school hours. One research assistant was available to support if necessary. The average time needed to complete the questionnaires was 30 minutes. The questionnaires required to be completed by mothers and teachers were transmitted and recollected in one week by teachers in closed envelopes. The study was approved by the ethical board of the university. Conducted analyses were utilized via SPSS 20.00 package program.

Results

According to the aim of the current study, a number of regression analyses were applied for testing mediator role of negative maternal emotion socialization in the association between children's observed behavior problems and mothers' education status and self-blame appraisals about parental conflict. This mediation was assessed considering Baron and Kenny's (1986) criteria.

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted. In these analyses, for the first model, self-blame sub-scale scores of Children's Perception of Marital Conflict Inventory; for the second model, mothers' education status were used as predictive variables. For the both models, the total score derived from Conners' Parent and Rating Scale was the predicted variable and total score of negative sub-scales of Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale was taken as the mediating variable.

Results indicated that while the association between children's behavior problems and self-blame ap-

praisals about parental conflict was partially mediated by maternal negative emotion socialization, the associations between children's behavior problems and mothers' education status is fully mediated by maternal negative emotion socialization.

Discussion

In this study, some variables in relation with children's behavior problems and whether maternal emotion socialization mediate the associations were tested for the purpose of assessing the contribution of the emotion socialization, which is considered as a new concept for Turkish literature, in the observed behavior problems of children. Types of scaled behavior problems were taken into account during the process of variables' selection.

Results pointed out the relationship between children's behavior problems and mothers' education status that is fully mediated by negative maternal emotion socialization. Although there seem to be no research in which these variables had been assessed, there are some researches which indicate negative associations between maternal education status, negative parental attitudes and observed behavioral problems of children (Erarslan, 2010; Erkan, 2002; Savi, 2008; Tazeoglu, 2011; Terzi, 2009). In one study with a similar theme, Corapci, Aksan and Yagmurlu (2012) suggested that mothers with low education levels reacted more frequently in punishing and condescending manners to their children's negative emotions as compared to mothers with high education. On the other hand, it was observed that mothers' education status did not come up as a variable in international research. These research mostly deal with socio-economic status of the mothers (Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1994; Gortmaker, Walker, Weitzman, & Sobol, 1990; Harnish, Dodge, Valente, & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1995). This condition may give rise to the idea that variety of maternal education status and its reflections on familial interactions are local themes for cultures like Turkey. This locality may stem from the fact that when mother participants of this study were under education, compulsory schooling age in Turkey was younger than those in western countries.

Another result of this study suggested that the association between children's behavior problems and self-blame appraisals about parental conflict was partially mediated by maternal negative emotion socialization. Although there seem to be no research in which these variables had been assessed, there is some research with similar themes. According to De-Board Lucas and his colleagues (2010), emotionally non-supportive and controlling maternal reactions and attitudes strengthened the association between parental conflict and self-blame ap-

praisals of children. Other research with similar themes also suggested positive relationships between negative parenting, and severe and frequent marital conflicts (Erarslan, 2010; Fosco & Grych, 2007; Nelson, O' Brein, Blankson, Calkins, & Keane, 2009; Shelton & Harold, 2008). Given results give rise to the idea that these conditions may increase the severity of children's self-blame perception.

Further information about the contributions of emotion socialization to children's behavior problems can guide professionals to construct family training programs which can be applied to prevention and intervention studies. This study suggests two mediator models which associate some familial subfields by relating maternal emotion socialization approaches and some

familial variables considered as risk factors for the development of children's behavior problems. With supporting families on the fields suggested by results, it can be predicted that intervention process would accelerate and so reduction on severity of children's behavior problems would be observed.

In sum, this study can be considered as valuable in terms of its focus on an important theme about children mental health and specifically familial role on children's behavior problems. On the other hand, its focus on a variable namely emotion socialization approach that has not been widely studied in Turkish literature also offers a new familial component for family and child mental health practitioners as well as researchers.