

THE ASSOCIATIONS AMONG MOTHERS' ATTACHMENT TO THEIR PARENTS, APPROACHES TO CHILD EMOTIONS, AND PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract

The current study aimed to examine the direct and indirect contributions of mothers' early attachment to their parents (emotional warmth and overprotection) and approaches to children's emotions in mother-child relationship. The study sample consisted of 358 mothers of young children. Mothers' ages ranged from 20 to 53 ($M=34.81$, $SD=4.90$), and the children's ages ranged from 16 to 111 months ($M=54.70$, $SD=19.44$). Mothers reported their attachment to their parents (mothers and fathers), approaches to children's emotions, and mother-child relationship. Findings from the structural equation model showed that mothers' perceived emotional warmth from their parents was positively related to avoidance of their child's emotions and orientation child's emotions in the current context; overprotection experienced by mothers from their parents was positively associated with avoidance of their child's emotions in the current context. In addition, mothers' emotional warmth from their parents was indirectly related to mother-child relationship via mothers' orientation to child emotions. Overprotection experienced by mothers from their parents was indirectly related to mother-child relationship via avoidance of child

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emotions. Results highlight the potential transmission of relationship patterns between generations through emotional approaches.

Keywords: mothers, attachment, emotional approach to child, parent-child relationship.

Children begin their socialization by interacting with their immediate environment; therefore, parent-child relationship quality is crucial for childhood development and has consequences for lifelong health and well-being (Foran et al., 2020). Children learn to be more independent and self-reliant in the mother-child relationship in preschool years. Despite this increased independence, preschoolers still need a primary caregiver for support and security. Young children use the support and security they receive from their caregivers to adapt to the rapidly changing physical and social world around them (Marvin et al., 2016; Thompson, 2016). Parents could bring their history of attachment patterns to interaction with their children in the current context. By using these earlier patterns of attachment styles, parents utilize different approaches to their children's emotions, which could form a foundation for the quality of parent-child relationship (Cooke et al., 2019). Examining pathways from earlier perceived attachment patterns (both positive and negative aspects) to parental approaches to children's emotions in the context of parent-child interactions could pave the way for understanding differentiated links from attachment patterns of parents with young children supporting or inhibiting the quality of parent-child relationship.

Parents' emotional warmth and overprotection as part of the parent-child relationship could be considered as a proxy for parental attachment (Bahmani, et al., 2022). Attachment theory suggests that a secure attachment bond between parents and children is characterized by emotional warmth, responsiveness, and sensitivity to the child's needs (Bowlby, 1973; Juffer et al., 1997). While parents may have a well intention to protect the child, overprotective behaviors can hinder the child's autonomy and independence. Overprotection can be seen as an indicator of anxious or ambivalent attachment, where the parent may have heightened anxiety about the child's well-being and tend to overcompensate by being excessively controlling. Although emotional warmth and overprotection do not directly measure parents' attachment, they can provide valuable insights into the quality of the parent-child relationship and serve as approximate indicators of attachment dynamics. Further, parental attachment affects parenting behaviors (Watt, 2014). Parents use different parenting styles that can influence their children's growth and development. The evidence is clear that those parents who spend their childhood in less conflictual and more supportive conditions (i.e., receive more care, protection, and warmth from their parents) are more securely attached than those who live in a more conflictual environment. When there is a high degree of parental overprotection, children are

more likely to develop a dependent attachment style. When parental overprotection is low, children are more likely to adopt a secure attachment style (Young et al., 2019). In addition, parental emotional warmth facilitates the establishment of a harmonious relationship between parent and child by providing a positive family environment (MacDonald, 1992). Research shows that parental emotional warmth increases the closeness between parents and children and contributes to the development of secure parental attachment (Shadach et al., 2017). It is thought that studies conducted in this field can help improve parenting practices by guiding people on how they should raise their children. This is because, by utilizing these previous patterns of attachment styles, parents can exhibit different approaches to their children's emotions, which can form a basis for the quality of parent-child relationship (Cooke et al., 2019).

Theoretical Framework

Parent-child relationship affect children's cognitive, social, emotional, and language development (Fanti & Henrich, 2010; Kim & Baer, 2010; Tam et al., 2012). Simply, attachment theory posits that secure base behavior, characterized by parental sensitivity and responsiveness to the child's needs, plays a critical role in fostering a secure attachment bond (Ainsworth et al., 1978). By incorporating warmth and sensitivity as key components of the attachment patterns predicting parent-child relationship could expand the understanding of attachment patterns in parent-child relationship. In detail, we can move beyond a simplistic understanding of *overprotection* and gain a more comprehensive perspective by acknowledging that parental behaviors, such as overbearing reactions, can be multifaceted and rooted in complex dynamics within the parent-child relationship. While overprotection may initially capture the notion of excessive parental involvement and control, it fails to capture the nuanced interplay between warmth, sensitivity to emotional boundaries, and the development of attachment styles. Warmth and sensitivity refer to the emotional climate characterized by affection, support, and positive interactions between parents and children, fostering a sense of security and trust (Bowlby, 1969). On the other hand, sensitivity to emotional boundaries in the context of overprotection involves the parent's ability to recognize and respect the child's autonomy and emotional expressions, establishing appropriate boundaries while still providing guidance and support (Deans, 2020).

From the perspective of intergenerational transmission attachment, parental approaches to children's emotions and how parents form their interactions with their children could be influenced by the history of parents' attachment to their parents (Bowlby, 1973; Juffer et al., 1997). Similarly, Bowen's family systems theory, which shows how the mother inherits attachment tendencies from family history, emphasizes the importance of attachment patterns of family members as possible attachment figures in the child's relationship patterns. The mother's family history

determines her attitude towards her child; thus, her attachment behaviors and family characteristics may be transferred to the child (Bowen, 1978). The evidence is clear that a mother's attachment pattern and life experiences with her parents determine her attachment pattern with her children and her parental approaches (Hanson & Mullis, 1986; Iyengar et al., 2014; Lubiewska, 2012; Zajac et al., 2019). For example, Turkish mothers' bonds with their daughters affect their daughters' experiences of motherhood and their bonds with their babies when they become mothers (Şen & Kavlak, 2012). Overall, mothers of young children could bring their history of attachment patterns to current relationship with their children by practicing specific parental approaches grounded on their own experiences with their parents.

Mothers' Attachment to Their Parents

Attachment patterns established with parents could reflect both positive and negative aspects. Attachment representations come from mothers and fathers within a family (Arikan et al., 2022; Cowan et al., 2019; Pierrehumbert et al., 2009). Emotional warmth, a positive aspect of the attachment pattern, represents the physical and verbal expression of parents' feelings towards the child, creating a supportive and welcoming atmosphere for the child. An overprotective attachment pattern means being too concerned about the child's safety, preventing children from becoming autonomous (Arrindell & Engebretsen, 2000; Rohner et al., 2005). The emotional warmth between the primary caregiver and the child is considered a protective factor that reduces the negative impact of children's negative emotional experiences (Anthony et al., 2019) and facilitates the development of children's social adaptation (Daspe et al., 2019, Ruiz et al., 2021). The primary caregiver's sensitivity towards preschool children contributes to increased children's social competence and decreased problematic behaviors and mother-child conflicts. In addition, parental behaviors such as showing warmth, providing emotional support, and creating a secure attachment pattern can serve as protective factors against difficulties (Ahmetoğlu et al., 2022; Driscoll & Pianta, 2011; Saral & Acar, 2021). Mothers' history of attachment patterns could be transmitted to other relationship contexts, such as parent-child relationship, and form a basis for parental approaches to children's emotional expressions (Bowlby, 1973; Juffer et al., 1997). In the following sections, we will provide information regarding the transmission of attachment patterns and how these patterns may be reflected in the context of parent-child relationship and approaches to children's emotions.

Parental Approaches to Children's Emotions in the Context of Parenting

Parents tend to guide their children's emotions, particularly when children display negative emotions in a given context (Birmingham et al., 2017). Pereira et al. (2017) categorized parents' approaches to children's emotions into three

dimensions. The first dimension consists of the parent's capacity to be attentive and focused on recognizing and understanding the child's emotions and the parents' effort to help the child understand their own emotions. The second dimension consists of the parents' negative beliefs about the child's negative feelings and their avoidance of the child's feelings, which prevents the child from expressing their negative feelings. The third dimension involves parental acceptance of the negative emotions about the child and their capacity to tolerate the child's negative emotions and to accept the child's and their own negative emotions.

Parental approaches to children's emotions influence children's emotional expression and the quality of parent-child relationship (Brumariu, 2015; Cooke et al., 2019). For example, parents' inductive reasoning (i.e., positive approaches to children's negative emotions) was related to higher levels of emotion regulation (Acar et al., 2021). Further, children who are supported during their experiences of negative emotions by their parents could establish positive relationship with their caregivers (Ahmetoğlu et al., 2017). The existing evidence could suggest that being present and supporting children when they experience negative emotional arousal lead them to establish better and positive relationship with their parents. Nevertheless, parents' approaches to children's emotions could differ depending on their own experiences with their parents and how they utilize these early experiences with their children in the current context. In the following section, we will explain the links between early attachment patterns to current parent-child relationship via how parents approach their children's emotions.

Indirect Process: Indirect Link from Perceived Early Attachment to Parent-Child Relationship via Parent Emotion Regulation

Although parents intend to establish positive relationship with their children, their early attachment patterns established in earlier years could determine approaches to their children's emotions and parent-child relationship. Parents begin establishing relationship with their children depending on internal working models they created through a history of attachment parents with their own parents (Bowlby, 1969). In detail, the nature of early parent-child relationship (attachment patterns) forms the foundation for parents' perceptions of children and others as secure or insecure bases that can be reflected during comforting or creating a safe haven for their children (Bretheon, 1985). In addition, early attachment patterns could continue to impact how parents form relationship with their children, particularly in emotional arousal situations. For example, mothers who had unsupportive mothers in their childhood displayed heightened nonsupportive responses to their children at six months (Leerkes et al., 2020). Overall, theoretical and empirical conceptualizations posit that intergenerational transmission of parental approaches influences how parents are functional or dysfunctional in current interactions with their children (Leerkes et al., 2020; Van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2018).

Grounded in attachment theory, we conceptualized that mothers with supportive early attachment patterns (i.e., emotional warmth) could utilize supportive approaches to their children's emotions, such as acceptance and orientation towards emotions. On the contrary, mothers with nonsupportive early attachment patterns (i.e., overprotection) could utilize unsupportive approaches to children's emotions, such as avoidance of emotions. Although early attachment influences parents' current interactions with their children, the direction of the link between early attachment and current interactions could be different depending on the cultural context (Van Ijzendoorn et al., 2006). For example, although secure attachment is associated with parental sensitivity across cultures, the expression of attachment styles within the parent-child relationship could be different depending on the cultural context (e.g., utilizing more physical touch rather than seeking proximity (Posada et al., 1995; Vereijken, 1996). From these conceptual and empirical perspectives, we aimed to explore the links from early attachment to current parental approaches to children's emotions and parent-child relationship within Turkish mothers.

The Current Study

Parents naturally bring their attachment patterns established with their parents to their interactions with their children in their current lives (Bowlby, 1973; Juffer et al., 1997). Further, relationship patterns could be transferred from one generation to another through social interactions in parent-child relationship contexts. From this perspective, it is important to examine pathways of intergenerational transmission of attachment patterns through parental approaches to children's emotional expressions in the context of parent-child relationship. Grounding on the previous work and theoretical conceptualizations (e.g., Bowlby, 1973; Juffer et al., 1997; Leerkes et al., 2020; Van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2018) in the current study, we aimed to examine the contributions of parents' attachment patterns (i.e., emotional warmth and overprotection) to their current parent-child relationship, with the particular interest in the testing mediating role of parental approaches to children's emotional expressions (avoidance, orientation, and acceptance of child's emotions. The following hypotheses were tested to address the purpose of the current study. In the parenting roles in Turkey, it is seen that the mother is the person primarily responsible for the child's development, education, and behavior. On the other hand, cultural structures, which are in a constant state of change, have also created changes in existing parental roles. Although the father's establishing supportive relationship with his child and taking part in the care of the child have become expected behaviors in changing paternal roles, fathers are still mostly in the position of helping the mother. Studies conducted in Turkey also show that fathers generally feel responsible for providing financial

gain (Aksoy & Tatlı, 2019; Kuzucu, 2011). It is seen that it is usually the mother who feels responsible for all kinds of needs of the child from pregnancy and parenting roles are shaped in this direction (Özensel, 2004). Based on these cultural norms, this study focuses on the mother-child relationship. 1. Mothers' positive attachment patterns with their parents (emotional warmth) would positively and negative attachment patterns with their parents (overprotection) negatively contribute to parental approaches to children's emotional expression (Brumariu, 2015; Cooke et al., 2019). In detail, parents with attachment patterns of emotional warmth would use positive parental approaches to children's emotional expressions such as orientation towards and acceptance of the child's feelings. Further, parents with attachment patterns of overprotection would use negative parental approaches to children's emotional expressions such as avoidance of the child's feelings. 2. The pathway from parents' attachment patterns (i.e., emotional warmth and overprotection) to current parent-child relationship may be indirectly affected by parental approaches to children's emotional expressions (Leerkes et al., 2020; Van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2018). Such that, parents with attachment patterns of emotional warmth would use positive parental approaches to children's emotional expressions, leading to quality parent-child relationship. On the contrary, parents with attachment patterns of overprotection would use negative parental approaches to children's emotional expressions, leading to lower levels of parent-child relationship quality.

Method

Participants

The sample of the current cross-sectional study was from Istanbul, Turkey. In this study, we recruited 358 mothers of children (175 girls and 183 boys) in Turkey. To ensure consistency and a focused examination of the early childhood period, participants who had more than one child were instructed to complete the scales with reference to a single child within the specified age range. The mothers' age ranged from 20 to 53 ($M = 34.81$, $SD = 4.90$) years, and the children's age ranged from 16 to 111 months ($M = 54.70$, $SD = 19.44$). 48.8% of families had one child, 41.5% had two children, and the remaining families had three or more children. A total of 96.1% of mothers were married, and 54.5% were employed during the data collection. In the current study, we utilized the chain-referral sampling technique (Gravetter & Forzano, 2016). In detail, we recruited mothers through Google Forms, starting from the researchers' immediate environment, and expanded the data pool by referral of recruited mothers. Once data were collected, we checked the accuracy

of data entry and removed participants who did not meet the participation criteria of being a mother with a young child.

Instruments

Mothers' attachment to parents. We used the Turkish Form of the Egna Minnen Barndoms Uppfostran for children (S-EMBU; Arrindell et al., 1998). The scale has 23 items assessing adults' perceptions of their parents' behavior types towards themselves in childhood. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Dirik et al. (2015). It is a 4-point Likert-type (1 = never, 4 = most of the time) that individuals are expected to answer items separately for their parents. We used mothers' reports of overprotective attitudes (sample item: "My parents forbade me to do things that other children were allowed to do, for fear of something happening to me") and emotional warmth (sample item: When things went wrong for me, I felt that my parents were trying to comfort and encourage me") coming from their mothers and fathers. Internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) of overprotective attitudes were .82 and .81 for mothers and fathers, respectively. Cronbach's Alphas of emotional warmth were .86 and .87 for mothers and fathers, respectively. We averaged the target items to create each subscale where higher scores indicated the higher values of the target construct.

Parental Approaches to Children's Emotions We used the Parent Emotion Regulation Scale (PERS; Pereira et al., 2017), adapted to Turkish by Ahci et al. (2020). The scale is a 13-item questionnaire with responses rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (0 = never to 4 = always). The PERS consists of three subscales as parent's avoidance of the child's emotions ($\alpha = .77$, sample item: "At all costs, I must keep my child from being nervous"), parents' orientation to the child's emotions ($\alpha = .80$, sample item: "When my child is upset, I strive to understand what she/he is feeling"), and parent's acceptance of the child's and their own emotions ($\alpha = .61$, sample item: "I think it is normal to feel sad, frustrated or worried about some of my child's behaviors"). We averaged the target items to create each subscale where higher scores indicated the higher values of the target construct.

Parent-child relationship. We used the Parent-Child Communication Assessment Tool (ABCIDA; Arabacı & Ömeroğlu, 2016). The scale is a 37-item questionnaire with responses rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = always and 5 = never). The scale consists of five subscales: speaking ($\alpha = .83$, sample item "I use simple and neat sentences to express my feelings and thoughts to my child in a clear and understandable way"), listening ($\alpha = .81$, sample item: "I listen to my child carefully, trying to understand"), message ($\alpha = .71$, sample item-reversed: "When talking to my child, I threaten her/him in various ways when I am in a difficult situation"), non-verbal communication ($\alpha = .71$, sample item: "I show my

appreciation for my child's positive behavior by hugging or kissing her”), and empathy ($\alpha = .79$, sample item: “I respect my child's feelings and thoughts that differ from mine”). We reverse-coded items in the message subscale as they were inversely worded. We averaged the target items to create each subscale where higher scores indicated the higher values of the target construct. We calculated each construct's average variance extracted values (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and composite reliability for each construct (Jöreskog, 1971). See Table 1 for details.

Table 1. Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Reliability

Variable	Construct Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	Cronbach's Alpha
1. MCR_ Speaking	0.83	.40	0.83
2. MCR_ Listening	0.85	.53	0.81
3. MCR_ Message	0.73	.27	0.71
4. MCR_ Nonverbal Com	0.72	.30	0.71
5. MCR_ Empathy	0.78	.31	0.79
6. Avoidance of CE	0.78	.47	0.77
7. Orientation to CE	0.80	.51	0.80
8. Acceptance of CE	0.62	.36	0.61
9. Emotional Warmth_M	0.86	.48	0.86
10. Emotional Warmth_F	0.87	.50	0.87
11. Overprotection_M	0.82	.35	0.82
12. Overprotection_F	0.82	.34	0.81

Note. Com= Communication MCR = Mother-Child Relationship. CE= Child's Emotion. M= Mother. F= Father.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures were approved by the University Ethics Committee of Research on Human Studies. Data were collected through Google Forms. Initially, participants were informed about the study and asked for their consent.

Data Analysis

Data were screened for normality using skewness (|3|) and kurtosis (|8|) criteria (Kline, 2011). We used the Mplus 8.4 (Muthen & Muthen, 2017) for the structural equation model analysis. We followed two steps in our analyses: first, we ran a measurement model (Confirmatory Factor Analyses; CFA) where we created latent factors of the parent-child relationship, emotional warmth, and overprotection. Second, we ran a structural model where we regressed the mother-child relationship

on emotional warmth, overprotection, and parental approaches to children's emotions (acceptance, avoidance, and orientation. We reported standardized coefficients in the path analysis to report effect sizes (Durlak, 2009). In order to account for potential confounding factors, we incorporated several sociodemographic variables as covariates in our analysis. Specifically, we included family socioeconomic status (SES), child age, and child sex as covariates in our statistical models. To guide our covariate selection process, we employed a top-down model-building approach, whereby we initially included all relevant covariates in the model and subsequently eliminated nonsignificant variables one at a time based on the improvement in model fit (Wang & Wang, 2012). We tested the indirect effects' significance using the bootstrapping technique (2000 resampling) with 95% confidence intervals (MacKinnon et al., 2007). Following model fit indices were used to test model accuracy: Comparative fit index (CFI) > .90, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < .08, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) < .08 (Brown, 2006; Kline, 2011; MacCallum et al., 1996).

It is indeed important to consider the possibility that using self-reported surveys from the same respondents at a single time point may have introduced common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Understanding the conceptual distinction between the two constructs, we conducted Harman's single-factor test to examine the presence of common method variance among items of these two constructs. Harman's single-factor test is a post hoc analysis used to determine if a single factor can account for the majority of variance among variables of constructs (Chang et al., 2010). The results of Harman's single-factor test demonstrated that only 25.69% of the variance was explained by the first unrotated factor, which is below the 50% threshold (Chang et al., 2010), indicating that common method variance was not a significant concern in our study.

Results

We examined the bivariate correlations (Pearson's Correlation) among variables. Results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics for study variables ($N=358$)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. MCR_ Speaking	-											
2. MCR_ Listening	.72**	-										
3. MCR_ Message	.61**	.57**	-									
4. MCR_ Nonverbal Com	.57**	.58**	.44**	-								
5. MCR_ Empathy	.52**	.49**	.32**	.58**	-							
6. Avoidance of CE	.05	.001	-.04	-.03	.07	-						
7. Orientation to CE	.57**	.58**	.42**	.58**	.58**	.18**	-					
8. Acceptance of CE	.25**	.26**	.19**	.28**	.38**	-.06	.33**	-				
9. Emotional Warmth_M	.29**	.28**	.17**	.29**	.21**	.09	.24**	.07	-			
10. Emotional Warmth_F	.30**	.29**	.14**	.27**	.25**	.09	.27**	.08	.78**	-		
11. Overprotection_M	-.09	-.11*	-.17**	-.11*	-.12*	.02	-.09	-.03	-.13*	-.13**	-	
12. Overprotection_F	-.04	-.06	-.15**	-.09	-.05	.13**	-.06	-.03	-.02	-.09	.71**	-
<i>n</i>	358	358	358	358	358	358	358	358	358	358	358	358
Mean	4.12	4.34	4.15	4.46	4.07	2.46	3.42	3.15	2.70	2.61	2.45	2.25
<i>SD</i>	0.48	0.47	0.47	0.43	0.53	0.90	0.48	0.63	0.73	0.75	0.65	0.62
Min-Max	2.38-5	2.67-5	2.75-5	2.33-5	2.11-5	0-4	1.20-4	1.33-4	1- 4	1-4	1-4	1-4
Skewness	-0.64	-0.67	-0.40	-0.98	-0.51	-0.26	-0.87	-0.53	-0.22	-0.20	0.39	0.51
Kurtosis	0.93	0.28	-0.21	1.68	0.39	-0.53	0.97	-0.20	-0.79	-0.84	-0.46	-0.13

Note. * $p < .05$, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$, two tailed. MCR = Mother-Child Relationship. CE= Child's Emotion. M= Mother. F= Father. Emotional warmth and overprotection were reported by parents about their parents. All other variables were reported by parents about their children.

Direct and Indirect Associations

First, we tested a measurement model where the parent-child relationship consisted of speaking, listening, message, nonverbal communication, and empathy subscales, emotional warmth consisted of father-mother-reported subscales, and overprotection consisted of father-mother-reported subscales. Results from the measurement model showed an acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2(26) = 77.437$, $p < .001$, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .07 [90% CI: .05–.09], SRMR = .03, AIC (Akaike Information Criterion) = 4107.994, BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion) = 4216.649 (Brown, 2006; Kline, 2011). Standardized loading values ranged from .62 to .89, indicating acceptable loadings to target factors.

Second, In the structural equation models, we followed the top-down model-building strategy by which we started with a full model (i.e., including all possible covariates) and removed the covariate variable that was not statistically helping the model.

Final structural model fit the data well, $\chi^2(67) = 174.456$, $p < .001$, CFI = .94, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .06 [90% CI: .05–.07], SRMR = .05, AIC (Akaike Information Criterion) = 5953.191, BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion) = 6135.577 (Kline, 2011; MacCallum et al., 1996). Despite the lack of absolute fit in our model, other fit indices such as RMSEA, CFI, and SRMR align well with recommended values, indicating a reasonable fit. The discrepancies can be attributed to the model's complexity and comprehensiveness, grounded in robust theoretical constructs. Overall, the theoretical justification and empirical adequacy support the validity and utility of our model. In the final model, there were three latent variables: Emotional Warmth, Overprotection, and Mother-Child Relationship. The mother-child relationship was predicted by emotional warmth ($\beta = .20$, $SE = .05$), orientation to child emotions ($\beta = .54$, $SE = .04$), acceptance of child emotions ($\beta = .11$, $SE = .05$), and avoidance of child emotions ($\beta = -.09$, $SE = .04$). Emotional warmth was significantly related to avoidance of child emotions ($\beta = .12$, $SE = .05$) and orientation to child emotions ($\beta = .28$, $SE = .05$). See Figure 1 for complete associations.

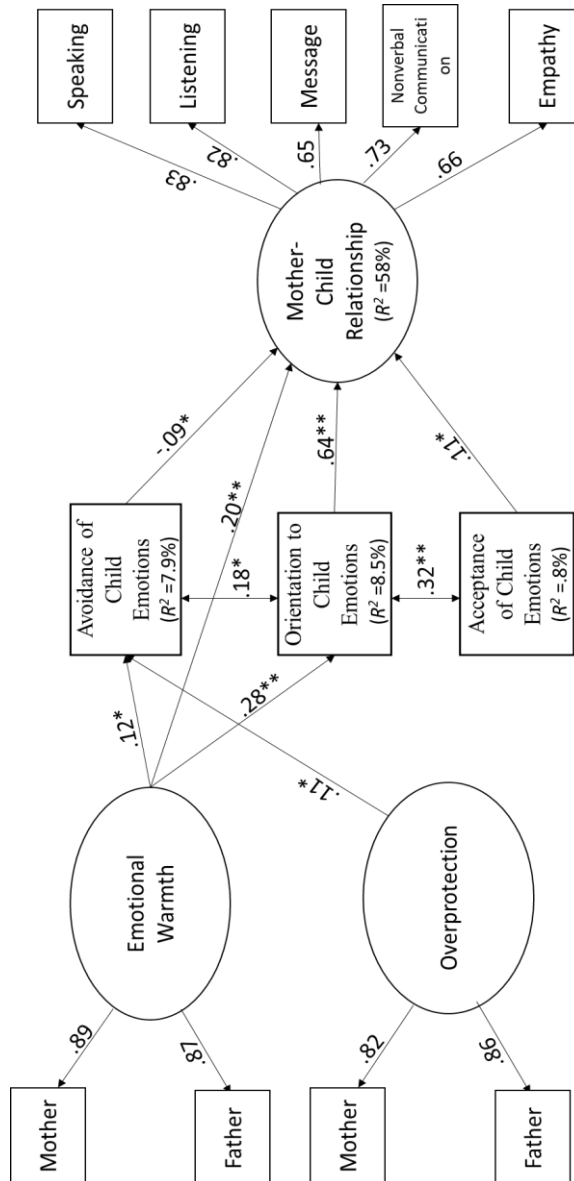


Figure 1. The structural model with standardized coefficients

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. We displayed the significant paths for brevity. Covariate (CV) for Emotional Warmth: Mother Age ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .05$). CV for Avoidance of Child Emotions: Family Socioeconomic Status ($\beta = -.22$, $p < .001$). Emotional warmth and overprotection were reported by parents about their parents. All other variables were reported by parents about their children.

We tested the indirect effects of emotional warmth and overprotection on mother-child relationship via approaches to child emotions. Emotional warmth was indirectly associated with mother-child relationship via orientation to child emotions ($\beta = .18$, [95% CI: .11 / .26]. Overprotection was indirectly associated with mother-child relationship via avoidance of child emotions ($\beta = -.01$, [95% CI: -.0009 / .02]. See supplementary material for graphical depictions of bootstrap distributions with bias-corrected 95% credible confidence intervals.

Discussion

We examined the direct contributions of emotional warmth and overprotection as part of the early attachment patterns to mother-child relationship. In addition, we tested the indirect effects of mothers' early attachment patterns (emotional warmth and overprotection) with their own parents on mother-child relationship via parental approaches to child emotions. We discussed our findings within the framework of intergenerational transmission of attachment patterns.

First, we found that mothers' early emotional warmth was positively related to their avoidance of child emotions and orientation of child emotions. The positive association between emotional warmth and parental orientation to children's emotions was congruent with previous studies (Crandall et al., 2015; He et al., 2020). In detail, mothers who experienced positive relationship with their parents displayed positive approaches (e.g., recognizing and understanding children's emotions). The reason behind the positive association between early emotional warmth and orientation to children's emotions could come from the transmission of internal working models of parental approaches to children's emotions. For example, mothers who had parents with positive approaches to their emotions could carry on these approaches to their current context with their children when they experience emotional arousal situations.

Another finding in the current study showed that early emotional warmth was positively related to parental avoidance of children's emotions. Transmission of early attachment to current parental approaches could be embedded in cultural norms such that parents may employ overprotection towards their children; however, this could be positively perceived by parents and children. Discrepancies between the current findings and previous research could be in part due to differences in methodology (e.g., Collecting retrospective data); therefore, further research is warranted to explore these discrepancies. In addition, emotional warmth leads to positive and nurturing interactions between mothers and their children, which aligns with the concept of a good fit between the child's temperament and the parent's caregiving approach. Nevertheless, the presence of emotional warmth does not mean that there is no stress and conflict in the relationship with the child. In detail, it is

important to acknowledge that well-intentioned mothers may also exhibit overbearing behaviors toward their children in the context of overprotection. From the perspective of the goodness-of-fit model, the mismatch between the parent's overbearing approach and children's characteristics may create challenges in the parent-child relationship and child development outcomes (Thomas & Chess, 1977). Therefore, in addition to the recognized significance of intergenerational transmission in shaping parental attachment patterns, it is crucial to consider the concept of maternal sensitivity. Maternal sensitivity refers to the mother's capacity to accurately perceive and appropriately respond to her child's signals (Deans, 2020). This concept holds particular importance as it encompasses the crucial aspect of the mother's ability to understand and accept her child's cues and needs in a responsive manner. By incorporating the construct of maternal sensitivity, we broaden our understanding of the intricate dynamics involved in the parent-child relationship and its impact on child development. Thus, the inclusion of maternal sensitivity as a focal construct provides a comprehensive framework for examining the interplay between parental attachment patterns and the quality of parent-child interactions in shaping child outcomes.

Second, in the current study, the overprotection dimension of perceived parental attitudes showed a significant relationship with parents' avoidance of children's emotions. This finding was aligned with previous work (Eisenberg & Morris, 2002; Zarra-Nezhad et al. (2015), showing that parents with overprotective tendencies tend to display negative approaches to their children in distress. This finding indicates that overprotective parenting tendencies coming from early attachment patterns could lead parents to utilize negative approaches to children's emotions, such as the avoidance of emotions. Mothers who experienced overprotective parenting in their early years may have learned to dismiss emotional expression as they did not develop resources and understanding of emotions, particularly in emotional arousal contexts.

Third, emotional warmth as part of early attachment was indirectly associated with parent-child relationship via parental orientation to child emotions. While the experiences of early emotional warmth are an important determinant of the quality of current relationship with their children, their ability to adapt to their children's emotions strengthens the parent-child relationship. It appears that the perceived early emotional warmth increases the parental ability to be tuned with their children's emotions (i.e., sensitivity to children's emotions), which in turn, naturally, helps parents to establish better relationships with their children. Parents' positive approaches to their children's emotions could be rooted in their early attachment patterns (Van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2018), and parents utilize these approaches to support interactions with their children.

Finally, parallel to previous finding, we found that overprotection as part of early attachment was indirectly associated with parent-child relationship via parental avoidance of the child's emotions. In detail, mothers with early attachment patterns

of overprotection reported higher levels of avoidance of their children's emotions, which was negatively associated with parent-child relationship. Existing theoretical conceptualizations and empirical findings show that mothers could carry their early adverse experiences within the family context to current relationship with their children (Thompson, 2016; Van Ijzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2018). Mothers using overprotection as a learned parenting approach may overlook their children's emotions, or children within an overprotective parenting context may not express negative emotions, which could undermine the parent-child relationship. Further, the interdependent nature of Turkish family relationships could promote overprotective parenting approaches transmitted from generation to generation as a norm (Kağıtçıbaşı & Sunar, 1992). From this perspective, mothers with overprotective tendencies could avoid their children's emotions with no intention of harming their interactions with them, considering this approach is perceived as their business-as-usual functioning.

Practical Implications of the Current Study

The quality of relationship between mothers and their children is based on how mothers approach children's emotions (Bouillet & Danet, 2022). Mothers could use parenting practices rooted in their early attachment patterns (e.g., emotional warmth or overprotection) while approaching their children's emotions and interacting with them. Considering the importance of early attachment patterns in the current parenting practices of mothers, clinical practices or intervention programs should take these patterns into account when supporting mothers with their parenting practices. Intervention programs such as Circle of Security (Cassidy et al., 2017; Huber et al., 2015) could be utilized to reflect early attachment patterns of mothers in current interactions with children so mothers will be aware of the effects of early attachment patterns during interacting with their children. By doing so, mothers can be supported in their understating of children's emotions and scaffolding of mother-child relationship.

Limitations and Future Work

The findings of this study should be interpreted considering its limitations. The cross-sectional nature of the data has limited making causal inferences and employing pure mediation analysis. Future work can collect data over time to detect the pure mediation and transactional nature of the associations. In the current study, data were obtained using self-report measures. The majority of the samples in this study consist of mothers with middle socioeconomic income levels. This may limit the generalization of the results to the population of Turkey. On the other hand, these results add strength to the study in terms of reflecting the average. The data were collected online, which may have increased the likelihood of biased responses. In

future research, it may be recommended to collect data through direct interaction with participants. Finally, some of the subscales had low-reliability values and average variance (AVE). Future work may use different measures with better reliability and AVE values.

Authors' Notes

Data Availability. The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding authors upon reasonable request.

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Informed Consent. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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