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Parenting and Turkish children's behaviour problems: the moderating role of qualities of parent–child relationship

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ABSTRACT

The current study is an examination of contributions of parenting styles and qualities of parent–child relationship (PCR) to Turkish children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours, with a specific focus on the moderating role of PCR (closeness and conflict) on parenting styles (authoritarian and democratic/authoritative) when predicting children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours. Participants were 94 children (56 boys) with the mean age of 7.05 years (SD = 0.88) in a suburban district in Turkey. Mothers reported on their parenting styles and relationships with their children as well as children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours. Results from regression analyses showed that parent–child closeness significantly moderated the association between authoritarian parenting and children's externalizing behaviours. Parent–child conflict significantly moderated the association between authoritarian parenting and children's internalizing behaviours. The parent–child conflict was positively associated with children's externalizing behaviour and authoritarian parenting was positively associated with internalizing behaviour. Limitations and future directions of the current study are discussed.

Introduction

A healthy childhood establishes a positive trajectory for adulthood. Across cultures, the purpose of parents is to support healthy development of their children's cognitive, emotional, and social competence. Trajectories of developmental domains are related to family context pertaining to the resources such as family socio-economic status, supporting child's language skills, and cognitive stimulation provided by parents (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). In general, parenting styles and parent–child relationships (PCRs) regarding sensitive and supportive approaches help children to have better social and academic outcomes; whereas, negative parenting approaches inhibit children's positive developmental outcomes including social and academic competence (Holden, 2015; September, Rich, & Roman, 2015; Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2005; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Children go under tremendous changes in their behaviours starting in early childhood and during early elementary school years as they interact with structured environments. In this period, although children start spending a decent amount of time outside home context, parents still are primary agents who influence children's behavioural outcomes.

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Children's social adjustment consists of both positive and problematic behaviours in early childhood. Therefore, children's behaviour problems relevant to early and late childhood can be categorized as externalizing and internalizing behaviours. Externalizing behaviours refer to group of behaviours (e.g. aggression, delinquency, hyperactivity, and conduct problems) that interrupt children's positive relationships with peers and adults within a social context (Campbell, Shaw, & Gilliom, 2000; Olson, Ceballo, & Park, 2002). Externalizing behaviour is considered as a risk factor for later behavioural problems such as adult crime and violence (Thompson et al., 2011; Zahn-Waxler, Shirtcliff, & Marceau, 2008). On contrary, internalizing behaviours (e.g. emotional symptoms) refer to behavioural problems that influence a child's internal psychological state rather than directly external social context (Liu, 2004). There is utility to separation of these two behaviour problems because each has distinct characteristics and different effects on child development (Liu, 2004). Therefore, the current study investigated these two constructs separately rather than a single construct.

To capture behaviour problems from both external and internal state of children, we considered conduct problems as externalizing and emotional symptoms as internalizing behaviour problems (Goodman, 1997). This approach has been used by previous research to examine children's behaviour problems (e.g. Stone, Otten, Engels, Kuijpers, & Janssens, 2015). These two constructs appear to be relevant in early childhood as these can impair children's functioning in social contexts; in particular, stability of these behaviour problems could inhibit children from effectively interacting with their social environments, in turn, this may lead children to malfunction in their social and school adjustment (Goodman, 2001; Mesman, Bongers, & Koot, 2001). Conduct problems as externalizing behaviour refer to a wide range of behaviours regarding aggressiveness, dishonesty, and disruptive behaviours (Hipwell et al., 2008). On the other hand, emotional symptoms as internalizing behaviours refer to group of behaviours including anger, anxiety, fear, and sadness (Klein, Otto, Fuchs, Reibiger, & von Klitzing, 2015). Both externalizing and internalizing behaviour problems have negative effects on children's developmental outcomes (Thompson et al., 2011; Van Lier & Koot, 2010). For example, kindergarten children's conduct problems and emotional symptoms longitudinally were associated with one another. In addition, these behaviours were related to low levels of social preference and higher levels of parenting stress (Stone et al., 2015).

Investigating precursors including parenting factors for children's behaviour problems are important to provide effective interventions to prevent maladaptive functioning of children later in their life (Erol, Simsek, Oner, & Munir, 2005). This may be more salient for developing countries as there is a need for development of mental health policies. Nevertheless, there are few studies examined pathways from parenting to children's behaviour problems in Turkish context (e.g. Akcinar & Baydar, 2016; Metin-Orta, Corpaci, Yagmurlu, & Aksan, 2013; Ulu & Fışıloğlu, 2002). Therefore, the current study, as a response to this need, attempted to examine how parenting styles and the qualities of PCR are related to children's externalizing (i.e. conduct problems) and internalizing behaviour problems (i.e. emotional symptoms).

Theoretical perspective

The Bioecological Human Development Model (BEM; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) posits that child development is based on bidirectional interactions of individual and the environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory ensures a useful framework for recognizing the different contextual influences on an individual and how those influences formalize and help the child's development (Holden, 2015). Considering emphasizing the effects of the environment and environmental characteristics on the functioning of the family and its members, parents interact with their children as these interactions shape child outcomes. Thus, parenting context has an impact on children's developmental trajectories including social and antisocial behaviour (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Driscoll & Pianta, 2011; Holden, 2015). From the perspective of the BEM, a meta-analytic review focusing on the associations between parenting and children's externalizing problems revealed that children of parents with

more acceptance, approval, warmth, guidance, and synchrony displayed an absence of coercive control and fewer externalizing behaviour problems (Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994). Different aspects of the parenting styles and PCRs are associated with later behaviour problems of children. Next section lays out the literature regarding the associations between parenting context and children' behaviour problems.

Parenting styles, parent–child relationships, and children's behaviour problems

Parenting styles influence both parental practices and goals, and in return have a role in socializations of children (Chan, Bowes, & Wyver, 2009; Latouf, 2008). Parenting styles within a culture are frequently adapted from previous generations and cultural norms (Brown & Iyengar, 2008; Latouf, 2008). Moreover, parenting style reflects the extent to which a parent has a warm and supportive relationship with the child (e.g. parental warmth) and provides adequate supervision as well as limits the child (e.g. parental control) (Sanders, Gooley, & Nicholson, 2000). Overall, parenting style is a conceptual classification of parents' practices towards their children by using behavioural approaches which are parental responsiveness (warmth and supportiveness) and demandingness (behavioural control) (Monaghan, Horn, Alvarez, Cogen, & Streisand, 2012).

Baumrind's (1967) classification of parenting styles is permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative (i.e. democratic). Permissive parenting style refers to parenting practices who have little interest to their children in terms of communication and parents are particularly responsive to children's emotional needs. Parents in this group do not force their rules and demands on their children and they demonstrate little control over children's behaviours (Alegre, 2011; Kotaman, 2016). Authoritarian parenting refers to parents' strict control for their children, commanding their rules, and making direct demands to their children regardless of children's autonomy. Authoritative or democratic parenting refers to positive practices such as positive parent–child interactions, caring for children's ideas, and letting children freely express their feelings with the purpose of the developing psychological and social well-being of children. Parents in this group provide a democratic home environment which includes consistent and flexible limits along with high levels of warmth and nurturance. In addition, democratic parents respect their children's individual differences and personality (Alegre, 2011; Baumrind, 1967; Kotaman, 2016; Monaghan et al., 2012).

A large body of research has investigated how parenting practices are related to children's behaviour problems across cultures (Chen, Zhou, Eisenberg, Valiente, & Wang, 2011; Estévez, Ozerinjauregi, Jauregui, & Orbegozo, 2016; Monaghan et al., 2012). Chen et al. (2011) investigated the longitudinal association between Chinese parents' parenting styles and their elementary school children's behaviour problems. The researchers found that authoritative parenting negatively and authoritarian parenting positively predicted child externalizing problems. Another study revealed that authoritative parenting practices contributed to preadolescents' (8–11 ages) behavioural adherence (Monaghan et al., 2012). Overall, practicing authoritarian parenting has a negative influence on children's positive behavioural outcomes and contributes to children's internalizing and externalizing behaviour problems. On the contrary, authoritative parenting practices support children's positive behavioural outcomes and impede or reduce the development of internalizing and externalizing behaviours (Estévez et al., 2016; Metin-Orta et al., 2013). Parenting styles may emerge differently and affect child outcomes across cultures depending on cultural norms and expectations (Kagitcibasi, 2007; Sen, Yavuz-Muren, & Yagmurlu, 2014; Super & Harkness, 1986). Considering this, there is a need for systematic investigation of the contributions of parenting styles to children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours in Turkish culture, which yet to be investigated. Therefore, we attempted to address this need by examining the contributions of Turkish parents' parenting styles to their children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours.

In addition to parenting styles, the qualities of PCRs also contribute the behaviour problems of children (Berg-Nielsen, Vikan, & Dahl, 2002; Goldberg & Carlson, 2014). The nature of PCRs is complex and multidimensional (Russell, Mize, & Bissaker, 2004). In general, the quality of PCR consists

of closeness and conflict between parent and the child. Close relationship refers to mutual respect, sensitivity, and affection; where conflictual relationship refers to struggle to get along and the parent's display of angry feelings or frustration toward the child (Driscoll & Pianta, 2011; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). From the attachment theory perspective (Bowlby, 1982), providing sensitive context where parent and child mutually contribute to the relationship is related to positive child outcomes including social competence, academic success, and lack of behaviour problems (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD] Early Child Care Research Network, 2003; Wood, 2007). For example, a secure-based relationship (i.e. closeness) found to be related to children's higher levels of adaptive and social behaviours (David & DiGiuseppe, 2016; Troutman, 2015). On the other hand, conflictual relationship between parent and child has a negative impact on children's behavioural outcomes (Hastings & Rubin, 1999). For example, parent–child conflict consisted of harsh punishment and verbal aggression towards child was associated with higher levels of antisocial behaviour of elementary school-aged children (Wasserman, Miller, Pinner, & Jaramillo, 1996).

Considering parenting as a multidimensional context (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), parenting styles and PCRs work together as they shape child behaviour problems. PCRs within the context of parenting styles have not been empirically investigated with Turkish children. However, research form Western literature (Kuczynski, 2003; Rubin & Chung, 2006) speculates that different aspects of parenting interconnectedly operate to provide functional environment so that children can have positive developmental outcomes. For example, authoritative mothers who held individualistic-emotional competence goals adapted different parental practices (a coaching or an emotion-encouraging approach); whereas authoritarian mothers endorsed relational and emotional competence as a parental goal, and they reacted to children's expression of emotions in a dismissing way (Lee, Li, & Thammawijaya, 2013). Another study found a positive association between parenting style and child social competence for authoritative parents; this association was negative for authoritarian and permissive parents (Xu, 2007). Understanding the interactive nature of parenting styles and PCRs may help researchers to develop intervention programmes to reduce the number of behaviour problems in school-aged children by guiding and supporting positive parenting practices (Barlow & Stewart-Brown, 2000; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002).

Culture and parenting

Child-rearing beliefs and practices differ across cultures depending upon parent's values integrated with cultural context (Rubin & Chung, 2006). Considering culturally oriented characteristics of parenting behaviours, same parenting behaviours may have different meaning and responses in different cultures. Kagitcibasi (2007) and Baydar, Akcinar, and Imer (2012) argued that as Turkish cultural context and family structures are different from Western culture so that same parenting behaviours in Turkish and the U.S do not receive same meaning from parents and children in these cultures. Taken cultural differences into account, causal findings in the U.S parents may not work in Turkish family context. For example, Turkish parents show controlling and warmth behaviours in the same time which gets positive reaction from their children, whereas this approach gets a negative reaction from children in the U.S. (Kagitcibasi, 1996). Although the current study was not a cross-cultural investigation, considering the importance of cultural context, we attempted to examine how parenting styles and PCRs work individually and together as they predict children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours during early elementary school years.

The current study

A decent number of research examining parenting styles and PCR related to children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours has conducted with children from Western context (e.g. Berg-Nielsen et al., 2002; Kuczynski, 2003; Rubin & Chung, 2006); however, what is less known is that whether parenting styles and PCRs individually and together are related to children's externalizing and

internalizing behaviours in non-Western context. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to examine the contributions of parenting styles and PCRs to externalizing (i.e. conduct problems) and internalizing (i.e. emotional symptoms) behaviours of Turkish children. In particular, we focused on the moderating role of PCR between the parenting styles and children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours.

We addressed the following research questions and hypotheses.

1-To what extent is PCR quality related to children's externalizing and internalizing problems? We hypothesized that close PCRs would be negatively (Hypothesis 1A) and conflictual PCRs would be positively related to externalizing and internalizing behaviours (Hypothesis 1B).

2-To what extent is the parenting styles (authoritarian and democratic parenting) related to children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours? We hypothesized that democratic/authoritative parenting would be negatively (Hypothesis 2A) and authoritarian parenting would be positively related to children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours (Hypothesis 2B).

3-To what extent does the quality of PCRs moderate the association between parenting styles and children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours? We hypothesized that a positive PCR (i.e. close) would ameliorate the association between an authoritarian parenting and children's externalizing and internalizing problems. That is, PCR high in closeness and low in conflict would buffer the detrimental effects of authoritarian parenting on children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours. In addition, positive PCR would buffer effects of relationship between democratic parenting and children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours (Hypothesis 3A). Finally, we hypothesized that negative PCR (high in conflict and low in closeness) would increase the negative effects of authoritarian parenting (high in conflict and low in closeness) on children's externalizing and internalizing problems (Hypothesis 3B).

Methods

Participants

A total of 94 (38 girls) children and their parents were recruited for the current study. Children were from early elementary school grades with the average age of 7.05 (SD = 0.88). According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (2015), the sample was composed of predominately low-income families, with 38.6% of parents reporting ₺1000/month (Turkish Lira = approximately $375/month), 50% reporting between ₺1000–₺1500/month, and 11.7% reporting ₺2500/month and higher. 62% of the parents completed elementary school, 26.6% of parents completed middle/high school, 3.2% of parents completed college, and 1.1% earned their Master's degree. This sample was representative sample of the context where data were collected. See Table 1 for complete demographic information.

Measures

Demographic information
Parents of children completed a demographic information form to obtain information about child's gender and age, as well as parents' age, level of education, and family income (see Table 1).

Externalizing and internalizing problems
The Turkish version of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 2001; Güvenir et al., 2008) was used to assess externalizing and internalizing problems. The SDQ has been used and shown high reliability and validity across cultures (Güvenir et al., 2008; Stone et al., 2015). Based on previous research (Stone et al., 2015), emotional symptoms (e.g. many worries, often seems worried) were used to assess children's internalizing problems. The conduct problems subscale was used to assess children's externalizing problems (e.g. often lies or cheats). Each subscale

Table 1. Participant's demographic information.

Child characteristics	n (%)	Missing	M	SD	Range
Gender					
Boy	56 (59.6)				
Girl	38 (40.4)				
Age (years)	94		7.05	0.85	5–9
Family characteristics					
Parent age	94		33.47	4.88	25–49
Parent education					
Elementary	62 (66)				
Secondary/high school	25 (26.6)				
College	3 (3.2)				
Master's degree	1 (1.1)				
Parent gender					
Male	26 (27.7)				
Female	68 (72.3)				
Parent income (₺)					
1000	36 (38.3)				
1000–1500	47 (50)				
2500 and higher	11 (11.7)				

was completed by parents and includes five items on a three-point scale ranging from 0 (not true) to 2 (certainly true). Sum of the items was used to create composite scores. Given distributions of the subscales were skewed, we used composite reliability rather than Cronbach's alpha for accurate reliability (i.e. Joreskog rho) (Joreskog, 1971). Reliability was 0.58 for conduct problems and 0.58 for emotional symptoms.

Parent–child relationship

The Child–Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS; Pianta, 1992) was completed by parents in the study. The Turkish version of the CPRS was validated by Akgün and Yeşilyaprak (2010). The CPRS is composed of three subscales: Closeness, Conflict, and Dependency. We used the Closeness (10 items; e.g. 'Your children value his/her relationship with you') and Conflict (14 items;'Dealing with your child drains your energy') subscales for the current study. The CPRS is a five-point Likert scale (1 = 'Definitely does not apply' and 5 = 'Definitely applies'). Average score for each subscale was used, higher scores indicating higher levels of that construct. For the current study, the internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) of parent–child closeness was $a = 0.93$ and parent–child conflict was $a = 0.83$.

Parenting styles

We used the Parenting Attitude Scale (PAS; Karabulut Demir & Şendil, 2008) to measure parenting attitudes towards their children. The PAS is based on Baumrind's (1967) parenting styles. Parents reported on two dimensions of the PAS in the current study; Authoritarian and Democratic Parenting. Authoritarian parenting refers to harsh and discipline-based approach to children (11 items; example item 'I yell at my child when he/she does something wrong'. Democratic parenting refers to sensitive and open-minded approach to children (17 items; example item 'I let my child to express his/her feelings freely'). The PAS is a five-point Likert scale where 1 = Never and 5 = always. Average score for each subscale was used, higher scores indicating higher levels of that construct. Consistent with the original study, for the current study, the internal consistency of authoritarian parenting was $a = 0.72$ and democratic parenting was $a = 0.78$.

After receiving permission from directorate of national education, parents were contacted through teachers, and each parent was asked to sign a consent form for his or her child. Consented parents were given the questionnaires for and parents returned these forms to teachers or school principals who returned them to the researchers.

Analytical approach

Descriptive statistics including skewness and kurtosis were tested to examine normality assumptions of the distribution for each variable (criteria for skewness is ±2 and for kurtosis is ±7; Curran, West, & Finch, 1996). None of the variables were out of acceptable range for non-normality; therefore, no transformation was applied. See Table 2 for details.

Children's relationships with parents (closeness and conflict) and parenting styles as independent variables were standardized (i.e. transforming to z scores) to create interaction terms for moderation models (Aiken & West, 1991). To examine the significant interaction between PCR and parenting styles, simple slopes analyses were conducted at three levels of PCR: high (1 SD above the mean), mean level, and low (1 SD below the mean) (Aiken & West, 1991). Children's externalizing and internalizing problems have been found to be associated with their gender and age and these associations appear to be similar across cultures (Corapci, Aksan, Arslan-Yalcin, & Yagmurlu, 2010; Munroe, Hulefeld, Rodgers, Tomeo, & Yamazaki, 2000; van Lier, Vitaro, Wanner, Vuijk, & Crijnen, 2005). Therefore, we controlled for children's age and gender in the analyses.

A post hoc power analysis using a hierarchical multiple regression was employed to examine whether there was enough power to detect effects (Cohen, 1988; Soper, 2017). The power analyses revealed that at $a = 0.05$ and given a medium effect size (0.17), statistical power of 0.83 was gathered with $n = 94$.

Results

Preliminary statistics

Descriptive statistics for all study variables and intercorrelations among them are presented in Table 2. As we hypothesized, children's conflictual relationship with parents (r (93) = 0.39, $p < .001$) and authorization parenting (r (93) = 0.29, $p < .01$) were positively associated with children's externalizing behaviour. In addition, authoritarian parenting also was positively associated with children's internalizing behaviours (r (93) = .27, $p < .01$).

Main effects models

We warranted the main effects of parenting styles and PCRs for children's externalizing (i.e. conduct problems) and internalizing (i.e. emotional symptoms) behaviours to examine whether these effects are present in Turkish sample. Parenting styles and PCRs were regressed on externalizing and internalizing symptoms. Parent–child conflict was positively associated with children's externalizing

Table 2. Bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics for study variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Externalizing Problems	–							
2. Internalizing Problems	0.26**	–						
3. Parent–child Closeness	−0.01	−0.15	–					
4. Parent–child conflict	0.39**	0.15	−0.01	–				
5. Authoritarian parenting	0.29**	0.27**	−0.01	0.36**	–			
6. Democratic parenting	−0.09	0.01	0.12	−0.18	−0.25*	–		
7. Child age	−0.01	0.03	−0.07	0.06	0.12	−0.04	–	
8. Child gender	−0.14	0.19	0.02	−0.05	−0.05	0.07	0.05	–
Mean	1.51	2.14	3.75	2.30	2.07	4.25	7.05	
SD	1.67	1.94	1.17	0.70	0.60	0.48	0.85	
Range	0–6	0–8	1–5	1–5	1–4.27	2.59–5	5–9	
Skewness	1.03	0.94	−1.13	1.45	0.79	−0.92	−0.10	
Kurtosis	0.25	0.35	−0.07	3.51	1.30	1.22	−0.53	

Note: Gender (1 = Male 2 = Female).
*$p < .05$, two-tailed.
**$p < .01$, two-tailed..

behaviours ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < .01$), such that for every one unit increase in parent–child conflict, externalizing behaviours increased by 0.54. In addition, authoritarian parenting was positively associated with internalizing behaviours ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < .01$), such that for every one unit increase in authoritarian parenting, internalizing behaviours increased by 0.54. These findings were partially supported our hypotheses 1B and 2B.

Interaction models

To examine our third research question, the interaction terms (e.g. parent–child conflict × democratic parenting) were added to the baseline model to test PCRs' moderating effect between parenting styles and children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours. Table 3 presents the final model parameters for the main effects models and the moderation models for externalizing and internalizing behaviours as outcomes. For externalizing behaviours, parent–child closeness significantly moderated the association between authoritarian parenting and children's externalizing behaviours ($\beta = -0.38$, $t = -2.17$, $p = .03$). Simple slopes analysis showed that the slope for authoritarian parenting on externalizing behaviours when parent–child closeness was at mean or high level was not significantly different from zero ($t = 1.71$, $p = .09$ and $t = -0.37$, $p = .70$, respectively). However, when parent–child closeness was low, the slope for authoritarian parenting on externalizing behaviours was significantly different from zero ($t = 2.84$, $p < .01$). Thus, when parent–child closeness was low, higher levels of authoritarian parenting was related to higher levels and lower levels of authoritarian parenting was related to lower levels of externalizing behaviours. See Figure 1 for interaction plot. Parent–child closeness did not significantly moderate the association between democratic parenting and externalizing behaviours ($\beta = -0.08$, $t = -0.53$, $p = .59$) or parent–child conflict did not significantly moderate the association between democratic parenting and externalizing behaviours ($\beta = -0.13$, $t = -0.53$, $p = .59$). See Table 3 for details.

Table 3. Final model parameters for main effects and moderation models for conduct problems and emotional symptoms by parenting styles and parent–child relationship.

	Externalizing behaviours				Internalizing behaviours			
	Main effects only		Interaction		Main effects only		Interaction	
	Estimate (SE)	t-stats	Estimate (SE)	t-stats	Estimate (SE)	t-stats	Estimate (SE)	t-stats
Intercept	1.26 (0.23)**	5.30	1.21 (0.24)**	4.93	2.61 (0.29)**	9.02	2.71 (0.28)**	9.39
Gender (female)	0.35 (0.31)	1.13	0.32 (0.30)	1.20	−0.82 (0.37)*	−2.19	−1.01 (0.36)	−2.78
Child age	−0.11 (0.15)	−0.70	−0.19 (0.15)	−1.26	−0.06 (0.18)	−0.37	−0.11 (0.18)	−0.63
Parenting styles								
Authoritarian	0.29 (0.16)	1.78	0.29 (0.17)	1.71	0.54 (0.20)**	2.69	0.40 (0.20)*	2.02
Democratic	0.03 (0.16)	0.22	0.04 (0.16)	0.26	0.20 (0.190)	1.05	0.19 (0.19)	1.01
Parent–child relationship								
PCR-closeness	−0.01 (0.15)	−0.13	−0.06 (0.15)	−0.42	−0.33 (0.18)	−1.77	−0.49 (0.18)**	−2.68
PCR-conflict	0.54 (0.16)**	3.30	0.63 (0.17)**	3.74	0.16 (0.20)	0.81	0.06 (0.19)	0.34
Interaction								
PCR-close * authoritarian parenting			−0.38 (0.17)*	−2.17			−0.39 (0.21)	−1.88
PCR-close * democratic parenting			−0.08 (0.15)	−0.53			−0.17 (0.17)	−1.00
PCR-conflict * authoritarian parenting			0.04 (0.11)	0.42			0.34 (0.13)*	2.62
PCR-conflict * democratic parenting			−0.13 (0.25)	−0.53			0.54 (0.29)	1.83

Notes: PCR = parent–child relationship; parentheses are standard error.
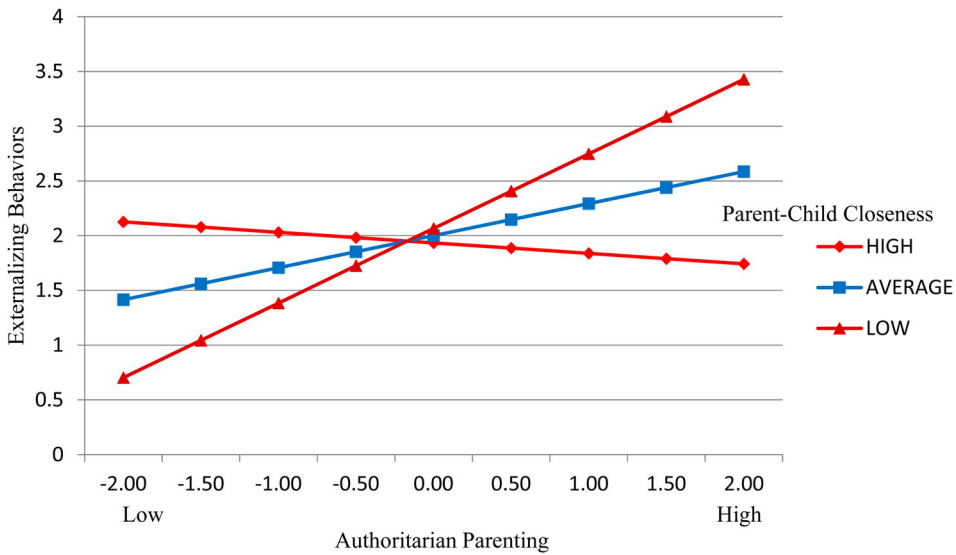*$p < .05$.
**$p < .01$.

Figure 1. Parent–child closeness and authoritarian parenting predicting externalizing behaviours.

For internalizing behaviours, parent–child conflict significantly moderated the association between authoritarian parenting and children's internalizing behaviours ($\beta = 0.34$, $t = 2.62$, $p = .01$). Simple slopes analysis showed that the slope for authoritarian parenting on internalizing behaviours when parent–child conflict was at mean or high level was significantly different from zero ($t = 2.02$, $p = .04$ and $t = 3.64$, $p < .001$, respectively). However, when parent–child conflict was low, the slope for authoritarian parenting on internalizing behaviours was not significantly different from zero ($t = 0.21$, $p = .83$). Thus, when parent–child conflict was mean or high levels, higher levels of authoritarian parenting was related to higher levels and lower levels of authoritarian parenting was related to lower levels of internalizing behaviours. See Figure 2 for interaction plot. Parent–child closeness did not significantly moderate the association between democratic parenting and internalizing behaviours
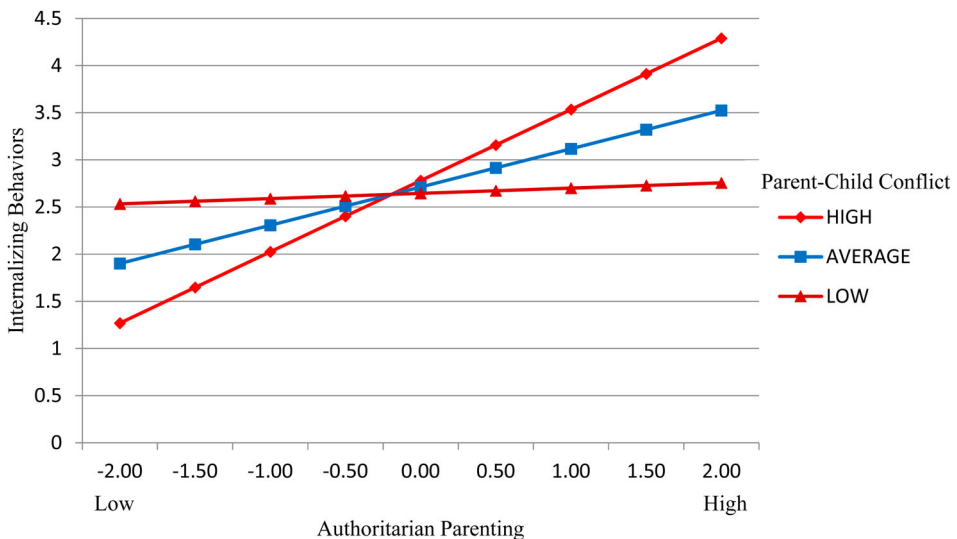

Figure 2. Parent–child conflict and authoritarian parenting predicting internalizing behaviours.

($\beta = -0.17$, $t = -1.00$, $p = .31$) or parent–child conflict did not significantly moderate the association between democratic parenting and internalizing behaviours ($\beta = 0.54$, $t = 1.83$, $p = .07$). See Table 3 for details.

Discussion

In the current study, we examined the individual and interactive contributions of PCRs and parenting styles to Turkish children's externalizing (i.e. conduct) and internalizing (i.e. emotions symptoms) behaviours. Three main findings emerged. First, parent–child closeness significantly moderated the association between authoritarian parenting and children's externalizing behaviours. Second, parent–child conflict significantly moderated the association between authoritarian parenting and children's internalizing behaviours. Third, parent–child conflict was positively associated with children's externalizing behaviour and authoritarian parenting was also positively associated with internalizing behaviour.

First, combination of low levels of parent–child closeness and high levels of authoritarian parenting appeared to be detrimental for children's externalizing behaviour. Such that children in this context demonstrated higher levels of externalizing behaviours. In contrast, low level of authoritarian parenting was associated with lower levels of externalizing behaviour in the context of low parent–child closeness. It appears that parents who practice higher levels of authoritarian parenting utilize low levels of close relationship with their children as this reflects hierarchical order (e.g. top down from parent to child) and controlling nature of authoritarian parenting style (Berns, 2016). This also may be due to authoritarian parents' restriction of child's behaviours by displaying low close relationships with their children. In turn, when children experience lack of close relationships with their parents and harsh discipline and controlling approach, they may get frustrated and demonstrate externalizing behaviours. This is commensurate with previous research (Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992; Webster-Stratton, 1998) showing that aversive relationships between parents and children in the context of harsh parenting led children to develop negative behaviours such as aggressive and conflictual relationships with others.

Second finding worth discussing is that in the context of average to higher levels of parent–child conflict, higher levels of authoritarian parenting were related to higher levels and lower levels of authoritarian parenting was related to lower levels of internalizing behaviour (i.e. emotional symptoms). This finding can be explained from a theoretical perspective (Darling & Steinberg, 1993) and previous studies (Grusec, Goodnow, & Kuczynski, 2000) pointed out that aversive PCRs and parenting practices may impede children's expression of emotions so that they withdraw themselves from expressing their emotions and display internalizing behaviour problems. In addition, Eisenberg, Cumberland, and Spinrad (1998) pointed out that parents' support and guidance (socialization of emotions) of children's positive and negative emotions can help children to regulate their emotional outcomes. Parents who are practicing authoritarian style tend to use harsh parenting (e.g. minimization of emotions and punishment) and this style leads conflictual relationships with their children. From this perspective, the combination of higher authoritarian parenting that is elevated by conflictual PCRs lead children to develop difficulties in regulating their emotional arousal (e.g. fear, distress, and anxiety) (Fabes, Leonard, Kupanoff, & Martin, 2001; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996; Shipman et al., 2007). For example, in one study (Havighurst, 2003), researchers found that children whose parents used harsh and critical approach to children's emotion showed difficulties in regulating negative emotions and poorer emotional knowledge (e.g. understanding others' emotional status).

Lastly, another finding from the current study was that parent–child conflict was positively associated with children's externalizing behaviour and authoritarian parenting was also positively associated with internalizing behaviour. This is congruent with previous research (Chang et al., 2003; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Murphy, 1996; Pianta & Harbers, 1996) showing that authoritarian and unresponsive parenting were positively associated with children's both emotional dysregulation (e.g. internalizing behaviour) and school adjustment problems such as negative behavioural interactions with

peers and teachers. In addition, Yagmurlu and Altan (2010) found that responsive parenting was positively associated with Turkish preschool children's emotion regulation and negatively associated with children's reactivity.

To conclude, consistent with previous literature (both Western and non-Western), results from the current study revealed that authoritarian and lack of sensitive parenting (i.e. low closeness and high conflict between parent and child) have negative effects on children's externalizing and internalizing behaviours during early elementary school years.

Implications of the current study

Findings from the current study along with the previous studies (Chang et al., 2003; Eisenberg et al., 1996; Pianta & Harbers, 1996; Yagmurlu & Altan, 2010) suggest that parenting behaviours can reduce or eliminate children's behaviour problems, including externalizing and internalizing behaviours (McKee, Colletti, Rakow, Jones, & Forehand, 2008; Webster Stratton & Hammond, 1997). Therefore, programmes such as the *Triple P-Positive Parenting Programme* (Sanders & Woolley, 2005) which focuses on improving positive parenting (e.g. being sensitive to child's needs and practicing authoritative parenting) has been helpful for parents to improve their positive interactions with their children and in turn, this approach is reflected in children's behaviours. Therefore, such intervention programmes could be used to improve Turkish parents' positive parting, especially authoritarian parents, to have better behavioural outcomes for children.

Limitations and future directions

There are three main limitations in the current study worth mentioning. First, we used cross-sectional approach with small sample size that may have limited our statistical power to detect some effects in the study. Future studies should utilize larger sample size and longitudinal research design to test more complex models to detect effects. Second, parents reported on their own parenting and children's behaviour problems; therefore, the shared variance between parenting and children's behaviour problems may have accounted for some of the effects of associations that merged in this study. Future studies can use multi-informant of children's behaviour problems to account for contextual nature (i.e. home vs. school environment) of children's behaviour problems as well as perceptions of different informants of the researched behaviour (Renk & Phares, 2004). Finally, data in the current study were drawn from low socio-economic families in suburbs of Istanbul. Therefore, it may not be possible to generalize these results to the high socio-economic families across Turkey. The future research may recruit people from high socio-economic families to examine whether these results are present in that sample or not.

Disclosure statement

Notes on contributor

Süleyman Yıldız is a graduate student in the department of Educational Sciences at Yıldız Techinical University and an elementary school teacher in Istanbul.

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