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## **Second-generation Turkish immigrant families in the Netherlands : parenting and toddler behavior problems**

Yaman, A.

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## Chapter 1

### General introduction

## **Turkish immigration in the Netherlands**

Migration takes place on a worldwide scale and in the second half of the 20th century, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, many Turkish labor migrants came to Europe on a temporary basis, because there was a need of labor forces to fill the shortages in the less skilled segments of the labor market. The majority of these first generation migrants (also named guest-workers) were recruited from the rural areas of the lowest socioeconomic regions in Turkey. Many migrants expected their stay to be temporary and to return to their homeland after a couple of years of hard work, but most of them ended up bringing their families to their new country and settled permanently. Nowadays, Turkish families and their children are the largest immigrant group in Europe (4 million) and they reside in a large number of European countries (Crul, 2008), including the Netherlands (377,000; CBS, 2009). The growth of the Turkish population in the Netherlands is currently mostly due to the increase of the second generation and much less due to migration. Currently, 48% (182,000) of the Turkish population in the Netherlands is from the second generation and it is expected that this percentage will increase to 60% (279,000) in 2050 (CBS, 2009). As the second-generation more often marries first-generation Turkish partners who grew up in Turkey ( $\pm 75\%$ ; Distelbrink & Hooghiemstra, 2005), the majority of children are now growing up in families with generational differences between parents. Despite the growth of the second-generation Turkish immigrant population in the Netherlands, little research has been conducted on parenting and child behavior problems in these families.

## **Acculturation and parenting**

Through immigration, people from different cultures come into contact with each other and in response to a changing cultural context the immigrants undergo an acculturation process (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002). Berry (1997) formulated an acculturation model in which the first dimension consists of a preference for maintaining one's own heritage culture and ethnic identity (e.g., Turkish culture), and the second dimension is the preference to participate in the host society (e.g., the Netherlands). Second-generation immigrants did not experience migration themselves, but they are exposed to living in two cultures, which can affect their adaptation in general and their parenting behaviors in particular. Thus, their parenting behaviors may differ from those in their home country as well as from those in their resident country, depending on their acculturation level. Immigrant parents who are oriented to the cultural values of the host

country more often adopt child-rearing attitudes and behaviors similar to the host society (e.g., Jain & Belsky, 1997; Yağmurlu & Sanson, 2009). For example, a study on acculturation and parenting values and practices in a sample of Turkish migrants living in Australia showed that mothers who were more willing to interact with the host culture favored more use of inductive discipline methods and child-centered goals which were more similar to the host society than mothers who favored separation from Australian society (Yağmurlu & Sanson, 2009). However, other studies have also shown that (Turkish) immigrants tend to maintain the family values and parenting practices (i.e., parental control) of their heritage culture (e.g., Bornstein & Cote, 2001; Güngör, 2008) and pass them on to the next generations (Phalet & Schönplflug, 2001; Schönplflug, 2001). A study among first- and second-generation Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands showed that adaptation to the host society was favored with respect to social contact with Dutch people and the Dutch language (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2003), but cultural maintenance was preferred regarding child-rearing and cultural habits.

## **Parenting context of Turkish immigrants living in the Netherlands**

In comparison to the native Dutch population, Turkish migrants in the Netherlands live under lower socioeconomic conditions, have low or no education, are unemployed or have low-paid employment, live more often in large families, and live primarily in socially deprived areas in the Netherlands (Distelbrink & Hooghiemstra, 2005). Although the socioeconomic position (i.e., the educational level) of the second-generation is better than that of the first generation, it is still more unfavorable than in the native population. For example, only 4% of the second-generation Turkish parents are highly educated (higher professional education or the university) in comparison to 35% of the native parents (Distelbrink & Hooghiemstra, 2005). The average age at which Turkish immigrant mothers have their first child is increasing, especially for the second-generation, but it is still lower than the mean age of native Dutch mothers. Moreover, in 31% of Turkish families the number of children is higher than three compared to 22% in native Dutch families. When investigating parenting practices in immigrant families, the sociodemographic context is important to take into account, as contextual factors have been shown to influence parenting practices (e.g., Bakermans-Kranenburg, Van IJzendoorn, & Kroonenberg, 2004; Fox, Platz, & Bentley, 1995). For example, The Netherlands' Prevalence study of Maltreatment of youth (NPM-2005) showed an increased risk of child maltreatment in traditional immigrant families (Turkish, Moroccan, Surinam, and Antilleans), but when the educational level of these families was taken into account, the increased risk for child maltreatment in these families

disappeared (Euser, Van IJzendoorn, Prinzie, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2009). Regarding parenting values, the differences between Turkish immigrant and native Dutch parents in autonomy and conformity as goals they valued for their children, disappeared after correction for parents' educational level (Pels, Nijsten, Oosterwegel, & Vollebergh, 2006).

## **Parenting in Turkish immigrant families**

Several studies in Western societies have shown that insensitive, authoritarian parenting practices are associated with increased child behavior problems (e.g., Campbell, 2002). Moreover, children with difficult temperaments who are raised in an adverse rearing environment are even more at risk of developing behavior problems because they have more difficulties in regulating their emotions, managing their impulses, and engage more often in novel and dangerous situations (e.g., Belsky, Hsieh, & Crnic, 1998; Frick & Morris, 2004; Van Zeijl et al., 2007). Similar studies on Turkish immigrant families with young children are relatively scarce. Recently, the existing literature on parental functioning in immigrant families living in the Netherlands has been reviewed (Mesman & Yaman, in press). This review confirms that there are very few studies examining parenting in immigrant families in the Netherlands. Overall, the existing studies showed that achievement and obedience of children were more valued in (first- and second-generation) Turkish immigrant families than in native Dutch families. Furthermore, Turkish immigrant mothers reacted more harshly to their infant's crying than Dutch mothers. In addition, Turkish immigrant adolescents characterized the child-rearing behaviors of their parents as more restrictive than their Dutch counterparts. Regarding attitudes toward gender roles, Turkish adolescents seemed to have the least egalitarian ideas compared to other immigrant groups and the native Dutch group. However, conservative attitudes about gender roles seem to shift to more egalitarian ones in second-generation Turkish immigrant families. For example, no differences were found between boys and girls in their perception of strict rules, support, and openness in their relation with their parents. According to the review by Mesman and Yaman (in press), many studies found mean level group differences in parenting behaviors between immigrant and native Dutch groups, but the associations between parenting behaviors and the development of children were generally comparable across ethnic groups. More specifically, a negative parent-child relationship, more restrictive control, and a lack of parental responsiveness were associated with more child emotional and behavioral problems among immigrants as well as the Dutch natives. These findings support the *no-group difference* hypothesis in which associations in developmental processes are not modified by culturally specific experiences, as opposed to the

*group differences* hypothesis that suggests cultural relativity of child socialization and that implies variations in the relation between family characteristics and child behavior problems across ethnic groups. The review concludes that most studies were conducted over a decade ago, their results were anecdotic or based on qualitative research, self-reports, and interviews, and therefore emphasizes the use of standardized observational methods in the future. So far, only a few observational studies were conducted among Turkish immigrant families with young children (Bus, Leseman, & Keultjes, 2000; Leseman & Van den Boom, 1999; Verhallen, Bus, & de Jong, 2006). One study showed that the social-emotional quality of mother-child interactions during book reading and problem solving were lower in Turkish immigrant families, compared to Dutch families (Leseman & Van den Boom, 1999), whereas another study found no differences in maternal support between the groups during book reading (Bus et al., 2000).

## **Behavior problems in Turkish immigrant children**

Externalizing behaviors, such as oppositional behaviors, aggression, and overactivity can occur as early as toddlerhood and are quite common during this period (Keenan & Shaw, 1994; Van Zeijl et al., 2006). In most cases, these behaviors decrease in the fourth year of life (Alink et al., 2006), but in others externalizing behaviors persist into later childhood and even adulthood (e.g., Loeber & Hay, 1997). Early-onset externalizing problems have been found to predict subsequent psychopathology and problems in several domains of functioning, including personal, social, and academic development (Campbell, 2002).

In the literature inconsistent results have been reported regarding child behavior problems (e.g., externalizing behaviors) in Turkish immigrant families living in the Netherlands with some studies finding more behavior problems in Turkish children compared to Dutch children when *parents* reported these problems (Bengi-Arslan, Verhulst, van der Ende, & Erol, 1997; Stevens et al., 2003), and other studies showing equal or lower levels of *teacher* or *self*-reported externalizing behaviors in Turkish children than in Dutch children (Crijnen, Bengi-Arslan, & Verhulst, 2000; Zwirs, Burger, Schulpen, & Buitelaar, 2006). In a survey study conducted in several Youth Health Care centers in the Netherlands (Jeugdgezondheidszorg), with a reach of more than 95% of children during the preschool years, professionals and parents filled out questionnaires on the well-being of children: more psychosocial problems in children were reported by parents in non-western ethnic families (12%) than native families (4%), whereas no differences were reported by the professionals (Öry et al., 2003; Zeijl, Crone, Wiefferink, Keuzenkamp, & Reijneveld, 2005). These discrepancies in results may be explained by the fact

that the professionals may have had more difficulties in signaling problems in children with a different ethnic background. In general, most of these studies focused mainly on school-age children and adolescents, whereas studies aimed at young immigrant Turkish toddlers are still lacking.

Overall, studies on Turkish immigrant families living in the Netherlands mainly focused on the occurrence of behavior problems during middle and late childhood. However, we do not know whether the incidence and the parenting predictors of such behaviors during toddlerhood are similar to those in native Dutch families. This information is necessary to adapt early intervention programs aimed at improving the quality of mother-child interactions to the specific child-rearing context of Turkish immigrant families.

## **The current thesis**

### **Aims of the study**

The general aim of the current series of studies is to examine the early development and parenting predictors of toddler externalizing problem behavior in Turkish immigrant families living in the Netherlands in comparison with native Dutch families. The current thesis addresses the following issues:

(1) Testing the *no-group difference* hypothesis versus the *group-differences* hypothesis by comparing the levels and interrelations of family stress, parenting efficacy, and toddler externalizing behaviors in second-generation Turkish immigrant and native Dutch families. In the Turkish group, the role of maternal acculturation will also be examined.

(2) Investigating mean level differences in observed maternal sensitivity and discipline, as well as differences in the interrelations of these parenting behaviors between second-generation Turkish immigrant and native Dutch mothers. The level and role of maternal acculturation and gender-differentiated parenting will also be examined.

(3) Examining the influence of child temperament, positive parenting, and authoritarian discipline on physical aggression in Turkish toddlers in the Netherlands.

Second-generation Turkish immigrant parents of 2-year-old children were recruited from the municipal registers of several cities and towns in the western and middle region of the Netherlands. Participating mothers were administered questionnaires on child and parent behaviors, and observations of parenting behaviors were conducted during home-visits. One year

after the first home visit, all families were visited at home again, using the same observational measures and questionnaires as in the first home visit.

### **Outline of the present thesis**

In *Chapter 2* perceived family stress, parenting efficacy, and child externalizing behaviors in second-generation Turkish immigrant families and native Dutch families are compared. *Chapter 3* addresses differences in patterns of parenting between second-generation Turkish immigrant and native Dutch mothers with toddlers. *Chapter 4* reports on the moderating role of child temperament in the association between parenting and physical toddler aggression in second-generation Turkish immigrant families. In *Chapter 5* the main results of the three studies are integrated and discussed.