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MASTERTHESIS  
Differences in Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviour of Turkish and Dutch Toddlers and  
the Role of Parenting

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## Abstract

The present cross-country study examined differences in problem behaviour between Turkish and Dutch toddlers and the role of parenting. Evidence for the importance of parenting in toddlers' problem behaviour has mainly been obtained by studies conducted in European-American individualistic societies. Much less is known regarding the importance of parenting for toddlers' problem behaviour in collectivistic societies. Mothers of 175 Turkish toddlers ( $M_{\text{age}} = 62.89$ ,  $SD = 10.29$ ; 42.3% boys) and mothers of 977 Dutch toddlers ( $M_{\text{age}} = 61.85$ ,  $SD = 8.63$ ; 48.1% boys) filled out the CECPAQ regarding their parenting behaviour and the CBCL/1.5-5 regarding their toddlers' behaviour. Turkish mothers reported higher levels of positive and negative discipline, and support than Dutch mothers. Turkish toddlers scored higher on both internalizing and externalizing behaviour than Dutch toddlers. Regarding toddlers' internalizing behaviour, positive associations were found with negative discipline and stimulation. These associations did not differ between the Turkish and Dutch sample. Maternal support appeared to be positively related with toddlers' internalizing behaviour in the Turkish sample, while in the Dutch sample this association was negative. Moreover, toddlers' externalizing behaviour was positively related with negative discipline and negatively related with support. These associations were stronger in the Dutch sample. At last, although no correlations were found between positive discipline and toddlers' behaviour, an interaction effect was found. This study indicates that there are differences between individualistic and collectivistic societies with regards to the relations between parenting behaviour of mothers and internalizing and externalizing behaviour of toddlers.

*Keywords:* parenting behaviour, support, stimulation, positive discipline, harsh discipline, internalizing behaviour, externalizing behaviour, toddlers, mothers, Turkish, Dutch

## Differences in Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviour of Turkish and Dutch Toddlers and the Role of Parenting

Over the last decades, there is increasing evidence for the importance of parenting in toddlerhood for the development of child behaviour (Maccoby, 2000). However, evidence concerning parenting and child behaviour has been mainly obtained from European-American individualistic societies (Raffaelli, Lazarevic, Koller, Nsamenang, & Sharma, 2013). Much less is known regarding the extent to which parenting in toddlerhood is equally important for the development of child behaviour in more collectivistic societies. Examining the importance of parenting for the development of child behaviour in collectivistic societies is a meaningful next step to identify alternative perceptions and modes of parenting, to enhance our understanding of what child rearing practices and beliefs are culture dependent, and to generate more universal theories applicable to a broader range of cultures (Bornstein, Putnick, & Lansford, 2011). The Turkish-Dutch population is the largest collectivistic group in the Netherlands and the children in this population show higher levels of problem behaviour than Dutch children (Statistics Netherlands [Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek], 2018; Leseman & Van der Boom, 1999). It is interesting to get a better understanding of child rearing practices and the association with child behaviour in Turkey compared to that in the Netherlands, as such knowledge may help us to design effective intervention and prevention approaches for the Turkish-Dutch population. Therefore, this research will examine whether levels of parenting behaviour of Turkish and Dutch mothers and the association with internalizing and externalizing behaviour are similar for Turkish and Dutch toddlers.

Parenting behaviours that emerge in Western studies as relevant to the development of toddlers are positive and negative discipline, support, and stimulation. According to the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) and the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977; Patterson, 1982) parental control and parental support are two important aspects of parenting in the development of child behaviour. The attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) states that support (i.e., affection, sensitivity) and stimulation (i.e., activities, exposure) are needed for a child to become securely attached to their caregiver and thereby providing a warm and secure base for the child to be able to gain experiences necessary for positive development (Bowlby, 1969; Hong & Park, 2012; Miquelote, Santos, Cacola, Montebelo, & Gabbard, 2012; Sroufe, 1979). This theory is supported by findings of different studies which have shown that high levels of support and stimulation are associated with positive developmental outcomes (Verhoeven, Junger, Van Aken, Deković, & Van Aken, 2010; Waller et al., 2015). The Social learning

theory (Bandura, 1977) states that new patterns of behaviour can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behaviour of others. When parents use negative discipline (i.e., physical or verbal punishment, psychological control) children do not learn adequate strategies for resolving conflicts, leading to aversive child behaviour. When parents use positive discipline (i.e., encouragement, reasoning) children do learn adequate strategies. Several studies, including meta-analyses, have shown that negative discipline is associated with more internalizing and externalizing behaviour and positive discipline is associated with less problem behaviour (Choe, Olson, & Sameroff, 2013; Ferguson, 2013; Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016; Laskey & Cartwright-Hatton, 2009; Stone et al., 2013; Verhoeven et al., 2010).

However, caution is needed taking the aforementioned European-American theories out of their sociocultural context (Chao, 1994). Parenting behaviours may have different relations with children's developmental outcomes arising from distinct meanings and normativeness in non-Western cultures (Bornstein, 1995; Gershoff et al., 2010). Parents in collectivistic and individualistic societies generally differ in parenting style (Rudy & Grusec, 2006). In collectivistic societies individuals are interdependent, whereby feelings, thoughts, and behaviours are embedded in the social context, and the emphasis is on interpersonal relationships (Raef, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2000; Varnum, Grossmann, Kitaya, & Nisbett, 2010). In individualistic societies, the individuals are independent, self-centred and not strongly attached to social relationships and the community (Raef et al., 2000; Varnum et al., 2010). These societal characteristics are likely to be reflected in parenting behaviour, as parents strive to develop attributes in their children that enable competence and successful membership of society (Bornstein et al., 2011; Harkness & Super, 1992). Research has shown that parents in collectivistic countries (e.g., Egypt and Iran) show significantly higher levels of authoritarianism (i.e., enforced discipline, less demonstration of affection) than parents in individualistic countries (e.g., Canada and America; Garg, Levin, Urajnik, & Kauppi, 2005; Pearson & Rao, 2003; Rudy & Grusec, 2006; Wu et al., 2002). The type of society seems to have influence on parental behaviour and therefore, it is expected that Turkish mothers in this study, living in a collectivistic society, will show more authoritarian parenting behaviours than Dutch mothers, living in an individualistic society. More specifically, it is expected that Turkish mothers will show more negative discipline and less positive discipline, support, and stimulation than Dutch mothers.

Differences between collectivistic and individualistic societies are also likely to be reflected in child behaviour, as behaviours are valued differently across cultural groups (Guttmannova, Szanyi, & Cali, 2008; Matsumoto, Yoo, & Nakagawa, 2008). For example,

collectivistic societies foster ingroup goals over personal goals, whereas individual societies foster personal goals over ingroup goals. As a result, open expression of emotion is valued less in collectivistic societies than in individualistic societies (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Because parents will therefore encourage other behaviours in their child, it is expected that there are differences in the development of child behaviour between collectivistic and individualistic societies. To date, there are no studies that directly compared Turkish and Dutch toddlers, but the results of two separate studies suggest that Turkish toddlers show more problem behaviour in comparison to Dutch toddlers. National studies showed that 18% of Turkish toddlers scored above the clinical limit, while this was 11.2% for Dutch toddlers (Erol, Simsek, Öner, & Münir, 2005; Tick, Ende, Koot, & Verhulst, 2007). And looking at the mean scores, Turkish toddlers also scored a higher mean on the CBCL Internalizing scale and twice as high on the CBCL Externalizing scale than Dutch toddlers. Based on these two studies, it is expected that Turkish toddlers in this study will score higher on both internalizing and externalizing behaviour than Dutch toddlers.

As parenting behaviour and child behaviour are different in collectivistic and individualistic societies, the process by which parenting behaviour affects children's internalizing and externalizing behaviour may also be different. Two opposing models have been suggested: while the *ethnic equivalence model* suggests that there are no ethnic or cultural differences in the associations between parental behaviour and child adjustment, the *cultural values model* suggests that such ethnic or cultural variations do exist (Lamborn & Felbab, 2003). Both models have been tested and supported by empirical findings. Supporting the *ethnic equivalence model*, several studies have shown that the positive effects of authoritative parenting on child development are consistent across ethnic groups (e.g., Chiu, Feldman, & Rosenthal, 1992; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991). Supporting the *cultural values model*, studies have shown that the negative effect of authoritarian parenting style on child development is not consistent across cultures, including individualistic and collectivistic societies (e.g., Chao, 1994; Deater-Deakard, Dodge, Bates, & Petit, 1996). Up to now, research into the impact of the type of society (collectivistic versus individualistic) on the association between parental behaviour and child development is still scarce and more research is needed.

Knowledge of the differences in parenting practices and their association with child behaviour in different types of societies is important for a better understanding of the nature of childrearing in other societies (Bornstein et al., 2011). There is no previous research comparing parenting- and toddler behaviour in Turkey and the Netherlands examining

multiple parenting dimensions simultaneously, and measuring both internalizing and externalizing behaviour. To summarize, the present study examines (a) differences in parenting behaviour of Turkish and Dutch mothers, (b) differences in internalizing and externalizing behaviour of Turkish and Dutch toddlers, and (c) whether associations between parenting behaviour and toddler behaviour are moderated by the type of society of the mother-child dyads.

## Method

### Participants

Participants in this cross-country study were 175 Turkish mothers ( $M_{\text{age}} = 32.29$ ,  $SD = 4.59$ ) with a child between 35-96 months old ( $M_{\text{age}} = 62.89$ ,  $SD = 10.29$ ; 42.3% boys) and 977 Dutch mothers ( $M_{\text{age}} = 35.56$ ,  $SD = 4.82$ ) with a child between 36-83 months old ( $M_{\text{age}} = 61.85$ ,  $SD = 8.63$ ; 48.1% boys). Of all Turkish mothers, 25.7% completed tertiary education or higher, compared to 90.7% of all Dutch mothers. Thus, the vast majority of Turkish mothers only completed high school. The vast majority of both Turkish and Dutch mothers were married or lived together (97.7% and 97%).

### Procedure

The data was collected by means of questionnaires, completed by the mothers. Turkish and Dutch mothers were recruited through preschools. Dutch mothers were also recruited through daycare centres and personal contacts of students who cooperated in the data collection. Mothers received an introductory letter with information about the goal of the study, anonymity, and voluntary nature. Mothers gave informed consent before filling out the questionnaires and could always stop participating in the study without giving a reason. In this way, the ethical requirements of our faculty of social scientific research were met.

### Measures

*Parenting Behaviour.* Mothers completed 44 items of the Comprehensive Early Childhood Parenting Questionnaire (CECPAQ; Verhoeven, Deković, Bodden, & Van Baar, 2017), measuring self-perceived parenting behaviour on four domains: positive discipline (4 items, e.g., “I emphasize the reasons for rules”), negative discipline (10 items, e.g., “I yell or scream to my child when he/she has done something wrong”), support (15 items, e.g., “I know what my child feels or needs”), and stimulation (15 items, e.g., “I take my child outside to play, walk, or cycle”). All items were answered on a 6-point Likert scale varying from *never* (1) to *always* (6). Mean scores were used to compare parenting behaviours of Turkish

and Dutch mothers. High scores indicated that mothers showed these behaviours more often. Cronbach's alpha in the current study for the domains support, stimulation, positive discipline, and negative discipline were:  $\alpha_{\text{Turkish}} = .90, .86, .75$ , and  $.81$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Dutch}} = .91, .86, .79$ , and  $.77$ .

*Child problem behaviour.* Mothers also completed the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL)\1.5-5 (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000) to assess toddlers' behavioural problems. The current study focussed on the two broadband scales: internalizing behaviour and externalizing behaviour. The internalizing scale was assessed by 36 items (e.g., "cries a lot"). The externalizing scale was assessed by 24 items (e.g., "fights a lot"). Each item describes a specific behaviour for which mothers scored to what extent their toddler showed that behaviour in the past two months on a 3-point Likert scale (0 = *not/never*, 1 = *somewhat/sometimes*, and 2 = *very/often*). Mean scores were used to compare behaviours of Turkish and Dutch toddlers. Higher scores indicated more behavioural problems. Cronbach's alpha in the current study for internalizing and externalizing behaviour of toddlers respectively were:  $\alpha_{\text{Turkish}} = .88$  and  $.81$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Dutch}} = .85$  and  $.89$ .

### **Data analysis**

First, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to examine whether Turkish and Dutch mothers differed in their parenting behaviour and whether Turkish and Dutch toddlers differed on internalizing and externalizing behaviour. Univariate effect sizes were computed as an index of effect and were interpreted as small:  $\eta^2 > .01$ , medium:  $\eta^2 > .06$ , or large:  $\eta^2 > .14$  (Cohen, Miles, & Shevlin, 2001). Then two Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses (HMRA; one model for internalizing and one model for externalizing behaviour) examined whether parenting behaviour predicted problem behaviour of Turkish and Dutch toddlers, and whether these predictions were similar for Turkish and Dutch mother-child dyads. For both HMRA's, society was a dummy variable (0 = Dutch, 1 = Turkish), and the four standardised parenting variables were entered at stage one. At stage two, the four interaction terms between society and parenting were entered. Statistical significance of the outcomes was assumed when  $p < .05$ .

Before analysing, the data were checked on the assumptions of univariate and multivariate normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity (Allen, Bennett, & Heritage, 2014; Field, 2003). All assumptions to conduct the MANOVA, regression analyses, and HMRA were met: Boxplots, Skewness, and Kurtosis indicated that each variable in the regression was normally distributed and free from univariate outliers. Scatterplots indicated

that the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals were met. Relatively high tolerances for all predictors in the regression model indicated that multicollinearity would not interfere with the ability to interpret the outcomes of the analysis.

## Results

Table 1 shows that both Turkish and Dutch mothers had an average mean-score on positive discipline, support, and stimulation and a relatively low score on negative discipline. The MANOVA showed that Turkish mothers reported higher levels of positive and negative discipline, and support than Dutch mothers,  $V = .219$ ,  $F(4, 754) = 52.96$ ,  $p < .01$ . Effect sizes were small to medium (Table 1). Turkish and Dutch mothers did not differ in their level of stimulation. Additionally, Turkish toddlers had a high mean-score on both internalizing and externalizing behaviour and Dutch toddlers had a low mean-score on internalizing behaviour and an average mean-score on externalizing behaviour. Turkish toddlers scored significantly higher on internalizing and externalizing behaviour than Dutch toddlers,  $V = .801$ ,  $F(2, 1061) = 877.66$ ,  $p < .01$ . Univariate effect sizes imply a large difference in internalizing behaviour and a medium difference in externalizing behaviour of Turkish and Dutch toddlers.

Table 1

*Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) Results of Estimated Marginal Means of Parenting Behaviour, and Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviour of Dutch and Turkish Parents and Toddlers*

| Variable            | Turkish<br>( $n = 123$ ) |      | Dutch<br>( $n = 636$ ) |      | $F$        | $\eta^2$ |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------|------------------------|------|------------|----------|
|                     | $M$                      | $SD$ | $M$                    | $SD$ |            |          |
| Parenting behaviour |                          |      |                        |      |            |          |
| Positive discipline | 5.18                     | .83  | 4.86                   | .63  | 23.36***   | .03      |
| Negative discipline | 2.57                     | .77  | 2.13                   | .47  | 72.21***   | .09      |
| Support             | 5.32                     | .56  | 4.84                   | .53  | 83.23***   | .10      |
| Stimulation         | 4.40                     | .88  | 4.45                   | .59  | 0.58       | .00      |
| Toddler behaviour   |                          |      |                        |      |            |          |
| Internalizing       | .96                      | .32  | .22                    | .17  | 1637.41*** | .61      |
| Externalizing       | .96                      | .30  | .46                    | .30  | 316.08***  | .23      |

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .



Table 2 shows that in both samples negative discipline was negatively correlated with the other three dimensions of parenting behaviour and the other three dimensions were positively correlated with each other. An exception to this is that positive discipline and negative discipline correlated for the Dutch sample, but did not for the Turkish sample. The association between internalizing and externalizing behaviour of toddlers was positive for both the Turkish and Dutch samples: toddlers scoring high on one behaviour, were more likely to also score high on the other behaviour.

Regarding associations between parenting behaviour and toddler behaviour, Table 2 shows that when Dutch mothers showed more negative discipline and less support, they perceived more internalizing and externalizing behaviour in their toddler. In addition, for stimulation a negative correlation with externalizing behaviour was found: mothers who stimulated more, perceived less externalizing behaviour. No statistically significant relations were found for the Turkish sample.

Table 2

*Correlations between Parenting Behaviour, and Toddlers' Externalizing and Internalizing Behaviour*

| Measure                | 1      | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5      | 6      |
|------------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| Parenting behaviour    |        |         |         |         |        |        |
| 1. Positive discipline | -      | -.05    | .57***  | .53***  | -.00   | -.13   |
| 2. Negative discipline | -.10** | -       | -.21**  | -.33*** | .02    | .10    |
| 3. Support             | .54*** | -.19*** | -       | .51***  | .18    | -.10   |
| 4. Stimulation         | .41*** | -.13**  | .43***  | -       | -.08   | -.16   |
| Toddler behaviour      |        |         |         |         |        |        |
| 5. Internalizing       | .00    | .22***  | -.24*** | -.03    | -      | .79*** |
| 6. Externalizing       | .02    | .36***  | -.28*** | -.11**  | .64*** | -      |

*Note.* Correlations above the diagonal for the Turkish sample ( $n = 152$ ), correlations below the diagonal for the Dutch sample ( $n = 637$ ).

\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

Finally, two HMRA's examined whether parenting behaviour predicted internalizing and externalizing behaviour of Turkish and Dutch toddlers, and whether these associations were similar for Turkish and Dutch mother-child dyads (Table 3).

*Internalizing Behaviour.* The main effects of society and the four parenting domains accounted for a significant 63% of the variance in internalizing behaviour,  $R^2 = .63$ ,  $F(5, 732)$

= 251.55,  $p < .001$ . Table 3 shows that coming from the Turkish society, negative discipline and stimulation were related to higher levels of internalizing behaviour. Higher levels of support were related with lower levels of internalizing behaviour. Adding the four interaction terms of society and parenting behaviour accounted for an additional, significant 2% of the variance in internalizing behaviour,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$ ,  $\Delta F(4, 728) = 9.51$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .65$ ,  $F(9, 728) = 150.47$ ,  $p < .001$ . More specifically, Table 3 shows that society moderated the effects of positive discipline,  $\beta = -.13$ ,  $p < .001$ , and support,  $\beta = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ . As shown in Figure 1A, the two lines representing the Turkish and Dutch samples for internalizing behaviour are almost parallel and the difference in effect of positive discipline on internalizing behaviour seems almost negligible for Turkish and Dutch toddlers. Figure 1B shows that when Turkish mothers showed more support, they perceived more internalizing behaviour in the toddler. For Dutch mothers this association was reversed.

*Externalizing behaviour.* The main effects of society and the four parenting domains accounted for a significant 33% of the variance in externalizing behaviour,  $R^2 = .33$ ,  $F(5, 751) = 75.24$ ,  $p < .001$ . Table 3 shows that coming from the Turkish society, positive discipline, and negative discipline were related to higher levels of externalizing behaviour. Higher levels of support were related to lower levels of externalizing behaviour. Adding the four interaction terms of society and parenting behaviour accounted for an additional, significant 4% of the variance in externalizing behaviour,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.04$ ,  $\Delta F(4, 747) = 10.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .37$ ,  $F(9, 747) = 48.89$ ,  $p < .001$ . More specifically, Table 3 shows that society moderated the effects of positive discipline,  $\beta = -.15$ ,  $p < .001$ , negative discipline,  $\beta = -.20$ ,  $p < .001$ , and support,  $\beta = .15$ ,  $p < .01$ . Figure 2A shows that when Turkish mothers showed more positive discipline, they perceived less externalizing behaviour in the toddler. Opposite, when Dutch mothers showed more positive discipline, they perceived more externalizing behaviour in the toddler. In addition, the positive association between negative discipline (Figure 2B) and externalizing behaviour, and the negative association between support (Figure 2C) and externalizing behaviour were stronger for the Dutch sample than the Turkish sample. Given the lines for the Turkish sample, the effect of support on externalizing behaviour seems negligible.

Table 3

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model of Predictors for Internalizing Behaviour and Externalizing Behaviour*

| Predictor                     | Internalizing behaviour |         | Externalizing behaviour |         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|-------------------------|---------|
|                               | $\Delta R^2$            | $\beta$ | $\Delta R^2$            | $\beta$ |
| Model 1                       | .63***                  |         | .33***                  |         |
| Society                       |                         | .79***  |                         | .45***  |
| Positive discipline           |                         | .04     |                         | .16***  |
| Negative discipline           |                         | .09***  |                         | .22***  |
| Support                       |                         | -.13*** |                         | -.27*** |
| Stimulation                   |                         | .05*    |                         | -.02    |
| Model 2                       | .02***                  |         | .04***                  |         |
| Society * positive discipline |                         | -.13*** |                         | -.15*** |
| Society * negative discipline |                         | -.04    |                         | -.20*** |
| Society * support             |                         | .16***  |                         | .15**   |
| Society * stimulation         |                         | .04     |                         | -.16    |
| Total $R^2$                   | .65***                  |         | .37***                  |         |
| <i>n</i>                      | 737                     |         | 756                     |         |

Note. Society was represented as a dummy variable: NL = 0, Turkey = 1.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

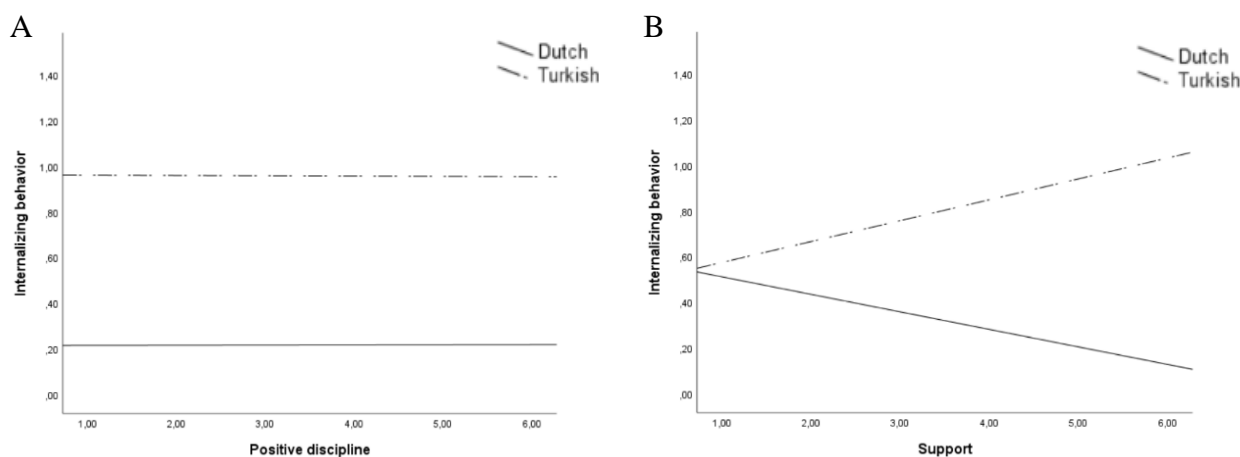
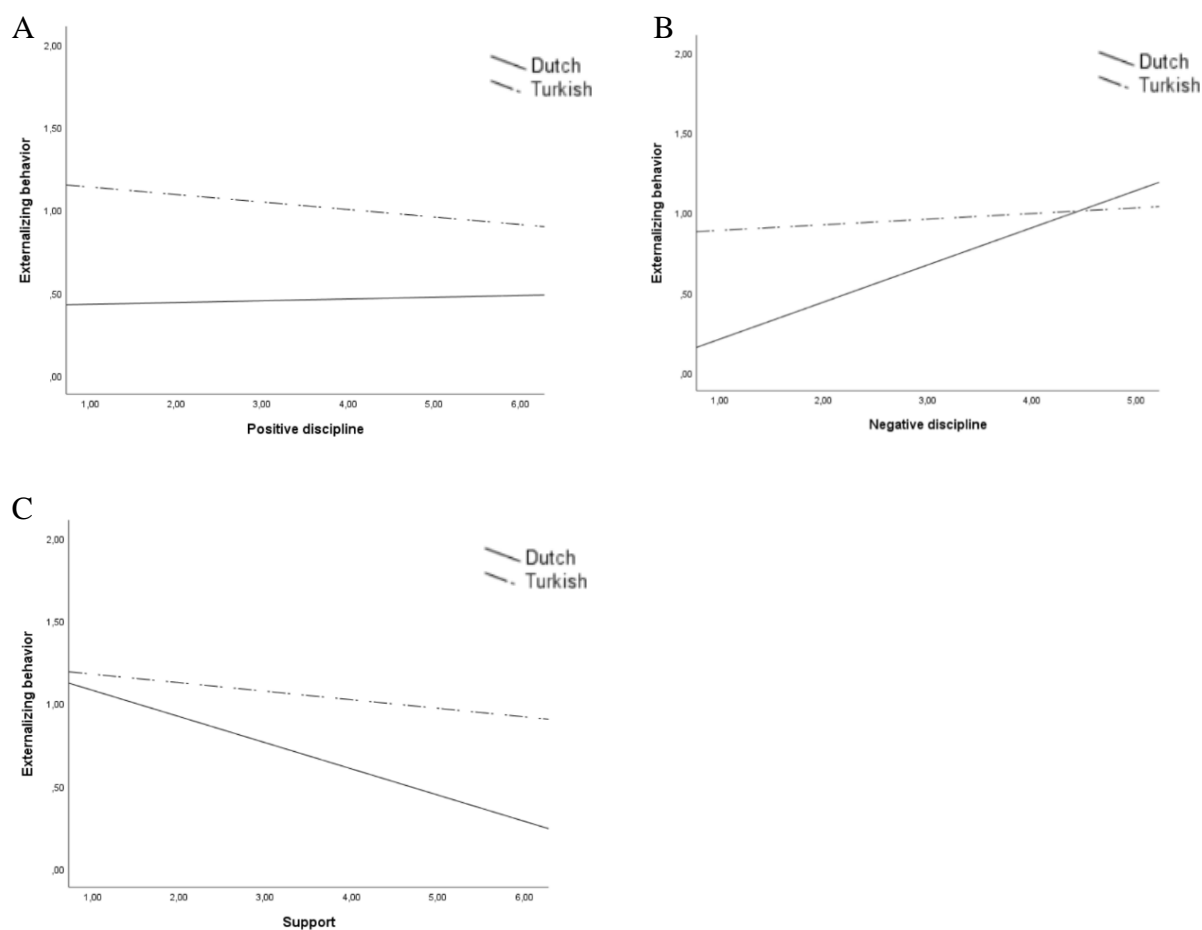


Figure 1. Plots calculated by SPSS for the interaction between society and the parenting behaviours positive discipline, negative discipline, support, and stimulation on internalizing behaviour of toddlers.



*Figure 2.* Plots calculated by spss for the interaction between society and the parenting behaviours positive discipline, negative discipline, support, and stimulation on externalizing behaviour of toddler.

## Discussion

The aim of the current study was to examine differences between a Turkish and a Dutch sample of mother-toddler dyads in parenting behaviour, child internalizing and externalizing behaviour, and associations between these parenting- and child behaviours. Results showed that Turkish mothers reported slightly higher levels of positive and negative discipline, and support than Dutch mothers. Additionally, Turkish toddlers scored higher on both internalizing and externalizing behaviour than Dutch toddlers. Positive associations were found for internalizing behaviour with negative discipline and stimulation in both samples. These associations did not differ between the Turkish and the Dutch samples. Furthermore, a positive association was found with maternal support in the Turkish sample, but this association was negative for the Dutch sample. Regarding externalizing behaviour, positive

associations were found with negative discipline and negative associations were found with support. These associations were stronger for the Dutch sample. At last, even though no correlations were found between positive discipline and toddler behaviour, a main effect with externalizing behaviour and an interaction effect with both internalizing and externalizing behaviour were found.

### **Parenting- and toddler behaviour**

Differences were found in the way Turkish and Dutch mothers raise their toddlers. Turkish mothers scored higher on negative discipline than Dutch mothers. This is consistent with earlier cross-cultural studies showing that, compared to parents in individualistic societies, parents in collectivistic societies show higher levels of authoritarianism, marked by among others negative discipline (Garg et al., 2005; Pearson & Rao, 2003; Rudy & Grusec, 2006; Wu et al., 2002). This could be because they have other parenting goals, such as stimulating dependent traits (i.e., obedience, politeness; Bornstein et al., 2011; Gouveia, Clemente, & Espinosa, 2010; Harkness & Super, 1992). To find out whether this is a valid explanation, future research should also include looking into parenting goals.

Contrary to results from previous studies (Baumrind, 1966; Reitman, Rhode, Hupp, & Altobello, 2002) and our hypothesis, Turkish mothers in our study scored higher on positive discipline and support. It is therefore surprising that Turkish mothers scored higher on all aspects of parenting (with exception of stimulation). This raises the question whether the measuring instrument functions the same in Turkish and Dutch samples. The unexpected findings could be the result of measurement invariance, i.e. the same constructs having different meanings in different ethnic groups (Cheung & Rensvold, 1998). It is then not clear whether different scores between Turkish and Dutch mothers reflect actual difference in parenting behaviour or are caused by the fact that different constructs are being measured. An important step in cross-cultural research is therefore to look at measurement invariance first before comparing different cultural groups. This was outside the scope of this study. The unexpected findings could also be a result of overgeneralization of parenting styles in a type of society. A study into collectivistic, Arab societies showed that parenting styles differed across these collectivistic societies (Dwairy et al., 2006). This indicates that there is not one parenting style that is typical for all collectivistic societies. This is in accordance with Minkov et al. (2017), stating that “collectivism versus individualism is a continuum, not a dichotomy, meaning that each nation occupies a position on a scale rather than being placed in a box-like category” (p. 387). The Turkish society may therefore be more properly regarded as lying

about midway between collectivistic and individualistic (Gielen & Roopnarine, 2005). More cross-cultural research is needed using a continuum scale, like Hofstede's (2001) dimensional model of national cultures, to make more reliable suggestions.

Turkish toddlers scored higher on both internalizing and externalizing behaviour than Dutch toddlers. This comparative cross-country study confirmed what was expected from two separate studies (Erol et al., 2005; Tick et al., 2007). This could be explained by cultural normativeness (Gershoff et al., 2010); since ingroup goals are considered more important in collectivistic societies like Turkey than in individualistic societies such as the Netherlands (Matsumoto et al., 2008), Turkish mothers may find certain behaviour in their child more worrying than Dutch mothers. Therefore, country-specific standards are required to make reliable comparisons. Differences, however, might also be the result of measurement invariance. In addition, it can also be the result of differences in parenting behaviour as assumed from parenting style theories (e.g. Garg et al., 2005; Rudy & Grusec, 2006;).

### **Associations between behaviours of mother-toddler dyads**

As assumed from parenting style theories, parenting- and toddler behaviour may be associated differently in Turkey and the Netherlands. In line with previous studies (Choe, Olson, & Sameroff, 2013; Ferguson, 2013; Verhoeven et al., 2010; Waller et al., 2015), more negative discipline was related to more externalizing behaviour, and more support was related to less externalizing behaviour. Note that there are clear differences visible, with stronger relations for the Dutch samples. This could be explained by cultural normativeness of parenting behaviour (Deater-Deckard et al., 1996); as negative discipline is more accepted and used more in collectivistic societies than in individualistic societies (Gershoff et al., 2010), Turkish toddlers might consider negative discipline as more normal, making it less of an impact on them than on Dutch toddlers. Maternal support appearing to be more important in the Netherlands, may be explained by the fact that in individualistic societies it is important to be seen and supported as an individual to develop a sense of independence (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, and LaGuardia, 2006).

Also in line with previous research (Laskey & Cartwright-Hatton, 2009; Stone et al., 2013), results showed that when Dutch mothers showed more support, they perceived less internalizing behaviour in the toddler. Conversely, when Turkish mothers showed more support, they perceived more internalizing behaviour in the toddler. A possible explanation for this difference is that Turkish mothers may send ambiguous signals to their toddlers by being supportive while using negative discipline at the same time; this may cause internal

distress and negative emotions (Olsen et al., 2002; Verhoeven et al., 2018). However, as this concerns a cross-sectional study, it is also possible that the relation is bidirectional and Turkish mothers become more supportive when they see their child is not doing well.

The effect of positive discipline on toddler behaviour is much less clear. Regarding internalizing behaviour, no direct effect of positive discipline is found. For externalizing behaviour, a negative effect is found in the Turkish sample. Despite this, the analysis does indicate an interaction effect with internalizing and externalizing behaviour in both samples. We cannot offer an adequate explanation for these findings. More research is needed.

Previous findings confirm *the cultural values model* (Lamborn & Felbab, 2003). However, no differences were found in the positive relation of negative discipline and internalizing behaviour between the Turkish and Dutch samples. Additionally, no differences were found in the small positive association between stimulation and internalizing behaviour. Moreover, stimulation had no relation with externalizing behaviour. This may be explained by the fact that stimulation is more related to cognitive development than to emotional development (Verhoeven et al., 2017). Caution is needed when interpreting all found associations, as none of the correlations of parenting- and toddler behaviour were significant in the Turkish sample. Further research with a larger Turkish sample is needed to find out to what extent the relations exist.

### **Conclusions and limitations**

Overall, this research adds to the relatively limited cross-country research by comparing the associations between multiple parenting behaviours and toddlers' internalizing and externalizing behaviour in Turkey and the Netherlands. A limitation of this study is that results were based on questionnaires filled in by mothers, which could have led to potential bias such as socially desirable answers. Adding to that, there were differences in educational attainment in the samples of Turkish and Dutch mothers. Of all Turkish mothers, 25.7% completed tertiary education or higher and of all Dutch mothers, 90.7% completed tertiary education or higher. Although low educational attainment of woman is representative for Turkey (Durakbasa & Karapehlivan, 2018), this could have influenced the results.

In conclusion, this research showed that the type of society plays a role in differences in parenting behaviour of mothers, toddlers' problem behaviour, and the associations between these behaviours. This highlights the importance of conducting more cross-cultural research to enhance our understanding of different parenting practices and believes and the effects on toddler behaviour. This is also very important for the clinical practice, where information

about cultural differences is needed to strengthen intervention and prevention approaches. For future research it would be valuable to conduct longitudinal research which takes into account the bidirectionality of the parent- and child effect. This research also showed several complications of cross-cultural research. The challenge now is to conduct more cross-cultural research, continuing to take up the challenges that cross-cultural research entails (i.e., measurement and interpretation), to confirm and further explore the findings of this study.



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