



Predictor Role of Parental Neglect on Socio-Emotional and Moral Development and Behavioral Problems in Children

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine parental neglect as a predictor of socio-emotional and moral development and behavioral problems in children. The participants of the study consisted of 266 parent-child dyads in Hatay, Turkey. The data collection instruments included a Socio-Demographic Information Form, which was administered to both the parents and their children. In addition, children were administered the Social-Emotional and Moral Development Scale, whereas the parents were administered the Child Behavior Checklist and Multidimensional Neglectful Behaviors Scale. According to the stepwise regression analysis, it was found that the number of children the parents had, behavioral problems in children, nationality and duration of stay of Syrian parents in Turkey, and parental neglect predicted socio-emotional and moral development in children. In terms of behavioral problems in children, parents' age, educational status, and neglectful behaviors, in addition to children's socio-emotional and moral development, were found to be the significant predictors. The results of the study may shed light on the associations among parental neglect and the socio-emotional and moral development and behavioral problems in children for school authorities and mental health professionals in a cosmopolitan population with high levels of immigration.

KEYWORDS

Neglect; social-emotional development; behavioral problems.

INTRODUCTION

In the early years, children spend almost their entire lives in the home environment. In this period, the behaviors of the parents towards the child form the basis of the child's development (Beyazit & Bütün Ayhan, 2016). Parents being sufficiently sensitive to the child, providing a trusting and loving environment at home, and being stable and consistent in their behaviors help the child develop socio-emotional competence. In contrast, dysfunctional parental attitudes and behaviors such as neglect may cause the child to experience socio-emotional difficulties and adjustment problems (Nocentini et al., 2019). Child neglect can be defined as the inability or difficulty of caregivers to meet the needs, protect and provide the well-being of the children for whom they are responsible (Logan-Greene & Jones 2015) and it is categorized in various forms including emotional, physical, supervisory, medical, cognitive, and educational neglect (Howe, 2005; Straus, 2004). Parents in a situation of neglect are characterized as being indifferent to their children's needs and their communication with the child may be limited (Parke & Gauvain, 2012). These parents may have difficulties in monitoring the child's activities and may be unaware of where they are and what they are doing (Mulder et al., 2018), may have difficulty in providing the child with adequate care (Tyler et al., 2006), and deprive the child of social and emotional support (Straus & Kaufman Kantor 2005).

Since parental involvement plays a prominent role in the development of socio-emotional competence in children, neglect is closely related with impairments and deficits in development across socio-emotional domains (Semrud-Clikeman, 2007; Strathearn et al., 2020). Psychopathologies within this domain are among the most salient sequelae in neglected children (Zeanah et al., 2018). A lack of parental involvement is closely associated with insecure attachment (Borelli et al., 2015) and emotional isolation in children, referring to a lack of intimacy with other people who are the nurturing figures (Cacioppo et al. 2011). Neglected children may experience negative expectations about the trustworthiness of relationships, and consider themselves as unworthy and incompetent (Toth & Manly, 2019). These children may view themselves as responsible for the lack of involvement of their parents, experience feelings of shame, and guilt and remain emotionally unresponsive to their environment (Bennet et al. 2010) or exhibit aggression to protect themselves from future rejection (Moore et al. 2020).

Children construct their relationships with other people based on the early attachment relationships with their parents. They also activate feelings of anger, sadness, relief, fear, or happiness according to their parents' emotional expressions towards them. Neglect, therefore, may cause confusion in children's emotional reactions and may lead to deficits in emotional functioning (Milojevich et al., 2021). Neglected children may have difficulties in managing their feelings of anger and frustration (Seven, 2015), which may contribute to the emergence of behavioral problems (Putnick et al. 2012). In support of this theory, in a 22-year longitudinal study, Moutsiana et al. (2014) found that the attachment of infants to their parents was associated with emotion regulation, which is critical in initiating and organizing adaptive behaviors, as well as preventing maladaptive behavior and emotions. Another longitudinal study

conducted by Kim and Cicchetti (2010) provided evidence that experiencing neglect is related to emotion dysregulation, which is associated with symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal, in addition to aggressive and delinquent behaviors in children.

Socio-emotional development is crucial in terms of the child's ability to express themselves and be at peace with their environment, and also forms the basis of personality development (Chandio & Ali, 2019). A child who does not feel secure socially and emotionally in the home setting may experience adaptation problems, not only in childhood, but also throughout their entire life. According to Hildeyard and Wolfe (2002), childhood neglect is associated with poor social adaptation characterized by social withdrawal, and neglected children are more likely to present isolation in their social interactions and a lack of social skills in their school years in particular and subsequent emotional problems in their adult lives. Therefore, socialization within the family is crucial in order to support the socio-emotional development of children (Grusec, 2011). According to Eisenberg et al. (2011), the process of socialization involves mutual interaction between parents and children, and the goal of this process is primarily to enable the child to control their own behaviors and choose socially responsible alternatives. However, neglectful child-parent relationships lack this supportive dynamic to promote children's socio-emotional competence (Shipman et al., 2005). The findings of a study conducted by Dubowitz et al. (2005) supported the theory that there are significant associations among child neglect, impaired socialization within the family, impaired daily skills and behavioral problems in children. According to Merrell and Gimpel (2016), in order for children to socialize, their physical, social and psychological basic needs must be met. Consequently, the children can learn to regulate their behaviors according to the value judgements of the society, minimize their negative behaviors, behave in accordance with the rules, and positively interact with and maintain good relations with others. Therefore, it is plausible to argue that the emotions and behaviors learned in the socialization environment at home affect both the child's social relations and moral reasoning.

An adequate level of moral development includes prosocial behaviors and the inhibition of anti-social ones. Hence, a moral understanding in children develops in conjunction with emotional self-control (Woo & Hamlin, 2023). While parents provide a psychological basis for socio-emotional development, they can either hinder or facilitate the moral development of the child through their parental attitudes, and consistency in care and affection. Emotionally available and warm parents help ensure their children model and internalize moral behaviors, while the absence of adequate parental care and affection can disrupt the development of children's understanding of what behavior is appropriate (Koenig, 2000). Studies have shown that children who do not receive an adequate level of emotional response and empathy from their parents may have difficulty in exhibiting the ability to feel concern for the feelings others in social relationships (Boele et al., 2019) and may not develop perspective taking skills (Farrant et al., 2012). The lack of both of these abilities in children is shown to be associated with

emotional response and behavioral problems in children (Dadds et al., 2012; Heagle et al., 2006).

The literature discussed above indicates that maltreatment is significantly associated with optimal socio-emotional and moral development of children. In general, it can be suggested that in the absence of sensitive and emotional interaction between children and their parents, the typical developmental patterns may be disrupted, and coupled with the traumatic experiences of maltreatment, this may lead to behavioral problems in such children, and that neglected children may be deprived of the opportunity to develop functional strategies to socialize and manage self-control (Kim & Cicchetti, 2006). On the other hand, although previous research has demonstrated links between parental maltreatment and socio-emotional development and behavioral problems in children, further researches are needed to investigate the causal associations and identify potential socio-demographic confounders. In addition, existing studies in the literature are largely focused solely on the concept of abuse or maltreatment in general and do not provide insights into the specific context of neglect, even though it has been suggested that abused and neglected children differ from each other in terms of emotional response and moral judgment, and that neglected children react more negatively to the unfair distribution of resources and show more fear reactions (Smetana et al., 1999). This argument implies that neglect may lead to more distinctive influences on socio-emotional and moral development among other types of maltreatment.

In addition to these concerns, it is also observed that the links between neglect, socio-emotional and moral development and behavioral problems have not been examined in the Turkish population, while maltreatment studies, including neglect, are mostly aimed at diagnosing cases and determining prevalence, and the phenomenon of neglect has not been addressed in the specific social context of Turkey (Başar, 2023; Beyazıt, 2015; Bütün Ayhan & Beyazıt, 2021). In recent years, Turkey has received a significant influx of immigrants from various countries in the region. In addition to Turkey's recent socio-economic conditions, these emerging demographic factors also need to be considered and assessed as it is possible that these factors may be potential confounders in the context of neglect, and thus, may be related to children's socio-emotional and moral development and behavioral problems. According to Polat (2017), the current cases of neglect are mostly based on conditions and context rather than parental malfunction. From this point of view, in neglect studies, it is important to take into account whether the cases are parental or contextual, or both. Examining neglect as an antecedent of socio-emotional and moral development and behavioral problems in children in a Turkish population with a dense cosmopolitan population and specific demographics may provide a current problem-based perspective on neglect and related concepts beyond the existing findings. A deeper comprehension of the basis of child neglect in such a context may also facilitate the screening and monitoring of children at risk as well as the implementation of preventive interventions responsive to the local needs. From this point of view, in the present study, the aim is to examine child neglect as a predictor of socio-emotional and moral

development and behavioral problems in children, taking into account the socio-demographic variables that may be potentially confounding the possible links. In line with this purpose, it was examined whether there is a relationship between the neglect levels of parents towards their children and the level of socio-emotional and moral development and behavioral problems in children. Furthermore, it was examined whether the variables such as parents' education status, income level, number of children, age and gender of children were confounding on the correlations examined.

METHOD

Participants

The present study consisted of 266 children attending three separate middle schools in the city of Hatay, Turkey, and 266 of their parents. In the process of forming the study group, data about the socio-demographic profiles of the middle schools in the city were obtained from the Ministry of National Education. The schools were chosen based on the socio-economic status and population characteristics, which were suggested to represent the entire population of the city. Children were between the ages of 9-12 with an average of 11.24 ± 0.91 and were attending 5th-8th grades. The socio-demographic information about the children and parents who participated in the study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. (see the appendix).

Instruments

In the study, a *Socio-Demographic Information Form* was administered to the parents and their children, while the *Social-Emotional and Moral Development Scale* was administered to the children. On the other hand, the *Child Behavior Checklist* was administered to the parents along with the *Parents Form of Multidimensional Neglectful Behaviors Scale*.

Socio-Demographic Information Form: A Socio-Demographic Information Form was prepared by the researchers and was administered to the children and their parents separately. The form administered to the children included questions on their age, gender and school grade while the forms implemented to the parents consisted of questions on nationality, educational status, income level, number of children, and the length of stay of Syrian families in Turkey, in addition to their age and gender.

The Social-Emotional and Moral Development Scale (SECDS): The SECDS was developed by Ji et al. (2013) to assess the socio-emotional and moral development of children aged between 8 and 12. The scale consists of 23, 4-point Likert type items assessing domains such as self-development, prosocial behavior, and self-control. The lowest and the highest scores in the SECDS range from 28 to 112. Higher scores obtained from the overall scale indicate a higher level of socio-emotional and moral development. The SECDS was adapted into Turkish by Bozgün and Baytemir (2019). In the reliability study of the Turkish form of the scale, the overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found as .88. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated as .91.

Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL): The CBCL was developed by Achenbach (1991) to evaluate the emotional and behavioral problems of children aged between 6 and 18 based on information obtained from their parents or caregivers. The scale consists of 113 items on a three 3-point Likert-scale that assess problems such as depression, anxiety, aggressive behaviors, somatic complaints, as well as thought, attention and social problems (Achenbach & Escorl, 2001). The lowest and highest scores from the scale vary between 0 and 226. Higher scores indicate prominent problem behaviors. The CBCL was adapted into Turkish by Erol et al. (2008). In the Turkish adaptation study, the coefficient for internal consistency was found to be 0.88 for the overall scale. The internal consistency of CBCL for the present study was calculated as .95.

Parents Form of Multidimensional Neglectful Behaviors Scale (MNBS-PF): The MNBS-PF is developed by Kaufman Kantor et al. (2003) for assessing child neglect. It consists of 45 4-point Likert-type items that evaluate the neglectful behaviors of parents in emotional, cognitive, supervisory, and physical domains (Kaufman Kantor et al., 2003). The Turkish adaptation study was conducted by Beyazıt and Bütün Ayhan (2019). In the study, the Turkish form was reduced to 23 items. The lowest and highest scores in the overall scale vary between 0-69. Higher scores show neglectful behaviors of parents. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was found as .68. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be .69.

Procedure

Prior to starting the data collection process, permissions for the scales planned to be administered in the study were obtained. Afterwards, the selected schools were visited, the school administrators were informed about the purpose and content of the research, and the necessary permissions from the administrations of school and teachers were obtained. Prior to the administrations in the classrooms, children were given information about the study and their consent was provided. Children were also informed about how to fill in the forms. Consequently, the forms were implemented to a total of 295 children at three separate schools. The forms prepared for the parents, including the measures and the informed consent forms, were given to the children in closed envelopes such that they could be delivered to their homes. The consent form also included instructions about how to fill the forms. The schools were visited one week later to collect the completed forms sent back by the parents. Out of the forms returned by the parents, a total of 266 children and 266 parents were ultimately included in the analysis. During the data collection process, 1964 Helsinki Declaration ethical guidelines were followed. Participant anonymity was ensured by the implementation of anonymous responses.

Statistical Analyzes

In the study, numerous variables were included in the analysis. For this reason, regression methods that enable the most significant variable in the model to be found were evaluated, and as a result, multiple linear regression based on the stepwise method was preferred as it allows the associations between the variables to be examined, while at the same time, the most confounding variables can be identified. In this regard, a preliminary analysis was initially conducted to examine whether the collected data met the assumptions for regression analysis,

and normality and multicollinearity of the data were also investigated. In terms of normality, the residual statistics were performed to determine whether the collected data showed a parametric distribution, and according to the regression standardized residuals, the distribution was found to be close to normal. Subsequently, multicollinearity was investigated through the examination of tolerance values and variance inflation factors (VIF). A tolerance value above 0.1 and a VIF value lower than 10 provide robust evidence of the absence or a small amount of multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2013). In the present study, the tolerance values varied between 0.204 and 1, and the VIF values varied between 4.910 and 1. According to these results, it is assumed that the data of the study met the regression analysis assumptions. In the analysis of liner regression, the children's scores in the Social-Emotional and Moral Development Scale and Child Behavior Check List were included as the dependent variables, while the scores of Multidimensional Neglectful Behaviors Scale in addition to the gender and age of the children, parents' gender, age, income and education level, number of children, and the length of time Syrian parents had spent in Turkey were included as independent variables. The data of the study were analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics and the correlation coefficient results of the Social-Emotional and Character Development Scale, Child Behavior Checklist and Parents Form of Multidimensional Neglectful Behaviors Scale are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. (see the appendix).

As shown in Table 2, the children's mean score for the Social-Emotional and Moral Development Scale is 96.68 ± 11.68 , and for the Child Behavior Checklist, it is 32.98 ± 24.24 . The parents' mean score for the Multidimensional Neglectful Behavior Scale is 21.16 ± 7.57 . An examination of the correlations among the scales reveals the scores of the Multidimensional Neglectful Behaviors Scale are negatively associated with the Social-Emotional and Moral Development Scale scores ($r = -.237, p < .01$) and positively correlated with the Child Behavior Checklist scores ($r = .220, p < .01$). In the table, it is also shown that the scores of the Social-Emotional and Moral Development Scale and Child Behavior Checklist are negatively correlated ($r = -.202, p > .05$).

The results of the stepwise regression analysis for the prediction of social-emotional and moral development in children are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. (see appendix)

As presented in Table 3, a regression analysis was run by performing the stepwise method. In the analysis, the children's scores for the socio-emotional and moral development were entered as the dependent variable. The gender and age of the children, in addition to the parents' age, gender, income and education level, number of children, and the length of time Syrian parents had been in Turkey were entered in the model as independent variables. In the analysis, the gender of both parents and children and the age, income and education levels of parents, and the length of time Syrian parents had been in Turkey were coded as dummy

variables. In total, the analysis revealed 6 models explaining 26% of the variance. In the final model, the number of children the parents had, behavioral problems in children, Syrian families staying in Turkey for at least 2 years, parental neglect and being Turkish predicted socio-emotional and moral development in children. When the standardized coefficients of regression were taken into consideration, Syrian families staying in Turkey for a duration of at least years 2 years ($\beta = -.701$) was found to be the strongest predictor in the model. The age and gender of children and parents, as well as parents' income level and educational status did not predict socio-emotional and moral development in children ($p > .05$).

The stepwise regression analysis results for the prediction of behavioral problems in children are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. (see the appendix)

As indicated in Table 4, stepwise regression analysis was performed by entering the behavioral problems of children in the model as the dependent variable. As in Table 3, in the analysis, the variables that were coded as dummy variables were gender of both the parents and children and the age, income and education levels of the parents, and the length of time Syrian parents had been in Turkey. In total, the analysis revealed 5 models explaining 18% of the variance. In the final model, parents' neglectful behaviors, being 30 years old and younger, being Turkish and being a graduate of primary school or just able to read and write, in addition to children's socio-emotional and moral development, predicted behavioral problems in children. When the standardized coefficients of regression were taken into consideration, parents being 30 years old and younger ($\beta = -.216$) was found to be the strongest predicting factor in the model. The age and gender of the children and the parents' gender, income level and number of children did not predict behavioral problems in children ($p > .05$).

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine parental neglect as a predictor of socio-emotional and moral development and behavioral problems in children in a socio-demographic context. As a result, it was found that parental neglect was positively correlated with socio-emotional and moral development, and negatively correlated with behavioral problems in children. On the other hand, socio-emotional and moral development in children was found to be negatively associated with behavioral problems. These results of the study are consistent with some findings in the literature. In a number of studies, it was shown that neglected children may experience difficulties in communication (Holosko, 2015), and in recognizing (Sullivan et al., 2010) and understanding the feelings of others (Logan-Greene & Jones, 2015). These children exhibit problems with both self-confidence (Zakeri & Karimpour, 2011) and trusting other people (Rees, 2008), and also have difficulties in establishing relationships with peers and adults (Park, 2014). In a study conducted by Koenig et al. (2004) involving 54 maltreated and 28 non-maltreated children, it was found that neglected children showed problem behaviors such as stealing more frequently than other children while in another study involving 246 children,

Pickens (2009) found that children to whom a socio-emotional development program was applied exhibited fewer behavioral problems and their social cooperation and interaction quality increased. When these findings in the literature and the results of the present study are evaluated together, it can be suggested that neglected children may experience impairment in their socio-emotional and moral development and may be more prone to behavioral problems as their unmet emotional needs may be undermining the development of emotional responsiveness and the ability to inhibit problem behaviors.

The prediction analyses of the present study confirmed the correlation findings and revealed results that expanded the context of these associations. In the initial regression analysis, whether parental neglect and behavioral problems in children predict socio-emotional and moral development was examined in terms of socio-economic factors. As a result, it was found that parental neglect and behavioral problems in children predicted socio-emotional and moral development along with the number of children, nationality, and the time spent in Turkey by families of Syrian origin. In the regression analysis, those who were not Turkish and those who had been in Turkey for two years or more were taken as the reference group. Accordingly, it was found that parents with a higher number of children had higher levels of neglect and their children had more behavioral problems, and this relationship was more significant for Syrian parents who had been in Turkey for one year or less. When these results are considered primarily in terms of parental neglect and socio-emotional and moral development in children, it can be suggested that as the level of parents' neglectful behavior increases, the level of socio-emotional skills in children decreases. In a study by Manly et al. (2001), it was shown that the personalities of maltreated children are characterized by lower levels of resilience and self-control, and these children display more behavioral problems than non-maltreated children, which is particularly evident in physical and emotional neglect. The basis of the child's psychological resilience is internal control, which emerges as a result of successful socialization. Internal control can be regarded as the ability to direct one's behaviors and suppress them when necessary; in other words, if the person has not developed self-control, they cannot act in accordance with the rules (Chapple et al., 2005). Following these findings and suggestions, it is plausible to argue that when parental responses to children are absent or inappropriate, children's abilities to learn, solve problems and relate to other people may be impeded or impaired and the risk of negative effects across socio-emotional development increases.

In terms of socio-demographic factors, nationality and length of stay in Turkey were found to be the significant confounding factors, along with the number children the parents had. Hatay province, where the study was conducted, is one of the cities in Turkey with the highest number of migrants and almost all of them are Syrian families (Association of Refugees, 2022). The phenomenon of migration can lead to adaptation difficulties, especially in families who have recently migrated. These families often face language barriers and have difficulties in accessing basic services such as health and education, as well as in accessing resources to sustain their lives economically (Aktaş, 2018). In the literature, there are various studies showing that

immigrant families experience intense economic and political difficulties and that the risk of maltreatment is higher in these families (Euser et al., 2011; Kenny et al., 2021). These findings can be interpreted as indicating that difficulties in adaptation to the country of immigration and socio-economic stressors may lead to neglect cases by reducing the functionality of immigrant families. In addition to neglect in the domestic environment, immigrant children may also be deprived of adequate social resources that support their development. For instance, a significant number of these children do not continue their education due to reasons such as language barriers and economic difficulties (Tunga et al., 2020), while children who continue their education experience exclusion and problems in peer relations (Türker & Göçmenler, 2020). In this regard, it can be suggested that children who do not have opportunities to socialize successfully may have difficulty in developing adequate self-control and resilience. In addition, the families of these children may not be functioning as a protective unit against difficulties in socialization. However, behavioral difficulties in these children should not be attributed solely to family and social conditions. Considering that the trauma of migration is still recent, especially in children who have been in Turkey for one year or less, it can be thought that these children do not have an adequate basis for socio-emotional development under conditions of war and exhibit various emotional and behavioral difficulties due to trauma. The fact that socio-emotional and moral development levels were higher as the number of years spent in Turkey increased, especially in children who had been in Turkey for six years or more, may be attributable to increased social adaptation and integration over time. When the results are reviewed, the variable related to the number of children in the family is also remarkable. The number of children in families in the region is generally high and it is even higher in immigrant families. This situation can be evaluated as a factor that may be reducing the functionality of the family, and it can be considered that the high number of children in these families together with socio-economic stressors may constitute a ground for neglect.

Another result of the study was whether parental neglect and socio-emotional and moral development in children predicted behavioral problems in the context of socio-economic factors. According to the findings, it was determined that parental neglect and socio-emotional and moral development in children predicted behavioral problems together with parental age, educational status and nationality. In the regression analysis, older age, educational status and not being of Turkish origin were taken as reference groups. Accordingly, it was found that as the level of neglect increases, behavioral problems in children increase and the level of socio-emotional and moral development decreases, and that these relationships were more evident in Turkish parents who were younger than 30 years of age and had an education of primary school or lower. In parallel with this finding, in a study conducted by Bütün Ayhan and Beyazıt (2021), it was found that as the educational level and age of parents increased, the level of neglect towards their children decreased. In another study conducted by Stith et al. (2009), data from 155 studies examining 39 risk factors were reviewed and it was found that parents being younger was a significant factor related with child maltreatment. In their study, risk factors such

as parental self-esteem and competency were found to be strong correlates of neglect in younger parents. When taken together, the results related to the age of the parents in the present study can also be interpreted that neglectful behaviors in these parents may be related to parenting skills, and the experiences of younger parents in terms of caregiving practices may be limited. The age of marriage in the region is generally low (Başkaya & Ünal, 2017). Therefore, younger parents may exhibit behaviors that can be defined as neglect due to their lack of efficacy in terms of parenting practices. The finding related to the level of education also supports this argument as a low level of education may be associated with a lack of knowledge and awareness about child development and child maltreatment in general. Therefore, it can be suggested that emotional absence, lack of responsibility and sufficient attention of younger parents and parents with a lower level of education may result in poorer social adaptation and behavioral regulation in children. Along with age and educational status, it is also noteworthy that children of Turkish parents have more behavioral problems according to the results of the analysis. To conclude, while the number of children and the time spent in Turkey stand out as the main pathways for Syrian parents in the relationships between the variables subject to the research, low age and education level are at the forefront for Turkish parents.

When the findings are considered as a whole, the present study's findings suggest that socio-emotional and moral development and behavioral problems in children may be associated with parental neglect in a socio-demographic context. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, this is the first study to evaluate child neglect in Turkey in terms of its socio-emotional links and socio-demographic context. The fact that the study included a population that has rarely been covered in maltreatment research, namely immigrant school children in Turkey, can be regarded as one of its strengths. Other strengths include the parallel use of parent and child report measures and the relatively large sample size. The findings of this study are also significant as they highlight a number of important implications in both school and clinical settings. Initially, it should be underlined that these findings contribute to the body of literature related to the potential links between parental behaviors and attitudes and children's socio-emotional development. In Turkey, unlike in cases of abuse, school authorities and mental health specialists are generally not well informed about the concept of neglect. Therefore, they may not be aware that behavioral problems may indicate problems at home in terms of neglect. Hence, it is of great importance that professionals such as educators, school counselors and mental health professionals recognize behavioral problems in children as a potential indicator of child neglect. In particular, in addition to planning interventions for children's behavioral problems, mental health specialists can evaluate children's behavioral problems from the perspective of child development and the specific socio-demographic conditions of the region, thus enabling them to plan and implement intervention programs to prevent contextual neglect, especially for vulnerable groups. However, it should be taken into consideration that neglect is only one of the factors that may lead to behavioral problems in children; not all children who

exhibit behavioral problems are exposed to neglect, and not all children who are exposed to neglect exhibit behavioral problems.

Beyond its significance and implications, some limitations of the present study should also be emphasized. The most prominent limitation of the study is that it was conducted with a cross-sectional design. In this regard, the interpretation of the data obtained in the study should be treated with caution since cross-sectional data prevents an objective assessment of risk and it is not possible to predict with full confidence whether there is a real causality between variables of concern. The method of analyzing confounders is another important limitation of this study since risk is only a statistical concept in descriptive and exploratory studies. In other words, the results may just point to different conditions, which may be associated with the negative outcomes and factors that may increase the likelihood of a negative situation, rather than directly revealing negative effects. Findings on variables such as nationality and length of stay in Turkey should be evaluated in this context. In addition to these, considering that the study found that there is a relationship between the socio-emotional and moral development of migrant children and the time they spend in Turkey after migration, it is of great importance that these results are confirmed with longitudinal studies as the effects of neglect may be mediated by protective factors in a wider time interval.

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APPENDIX

Table 1.*Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Children and their Parents*

		<i>Socio-Demographic Characteristics</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Children	<i>Gender</i>			
		Female	151	57.4
		Male	112	42.1
	<i>Grade</i>			
		5	91	35.7
		6	78	30.6
		7	34	13.3
		8	52	20.4
Parents	<i>Gender</i>			
		Female	154	58.5
		Male	108	41.5
	<i>Age Groups</i>			
		30 years old or below	38	14.5
		Between 31-40 years old	131	50
		Between 41-50 years old	77	29.4
		51 years old or above	16	6.1
	<i>Nationality</i>			
		Turkish	179	67.3
		Syrian	87	32.7
	<i>Educational Status</i>			
		Able to read and write or graduated from primary school	95	37.1
		Graduated from secondary school	69	27
		Graduated from high school	74	28.9
		University graduate	18	7
<i>Income Level</i>				
	Low	71	26.7	
	Average	177	66.5	
	High	18	6.8	
<i>Number of Children</i>				
	1 child	9	3.5	
	2-4 children	176	68	
	5 children or more	74	28.6	

Table 2.

The Descriptive Statistics and the Correlations Between The Social-Emotional and Moral Development Scale, Child Behavior Checklist and Multidimensional Neglectful Behaviors Scale Parents Form

Total Scale Scores	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Social-Emotional and Moral Development Scale	96.98	11.59	-	-.202*	-.237*
2. Child Behavior Check List	33.19	24.36	-.202*	-	.220*
3. Multidimensional Neglectful Behavior Scale Parents Form	21.14	7.53	-.237*	.220*	-

Note. * $p < .01$

Table 3.

Stepwise Regression Analysis Results Related to the Prediction of Social-Emotional and Moral Development in Children

Note. Only the significant β values from each model are shown.

Models	Variables	B	St. Error B	β	t	p
1	Neglectful behavior <i>F_{1,244} = 14.463, p < .01, R = 0.237, R² = 0.056</i>	.751	.197	.237	3.803	<.001
2	Neglectful behavior Parental age (30 years old or younger) <i>F_{2,243} = 13.323, p < .01, R = 0.314, R² = 0.099</i>	.727 14.548	.193 4.279	.229 .207	3.762 3.400	<.001 .001
3	Neglectful behavior Parental age (30 years old or younger) Socio-emotional and moral development <i>F_{3,242} = 11.999, p < .01, R = 0.360, R² = 0.129</i>	.611 14.744 -.369	.195 4.215 .127	.193 .210 -.179	3.141 3.498 -2.920	.002 .001 .004
4	Neglectful behavior Parental age (30 years old or younger) Socio-emotional and moral development Nationality (Turkish) <i>F_{4,241} = 11.598, p < .01, R = 0.402, R² = 0.161</i>	.610 16.319 -.383 9.336	.191 4.178 .124 3.081	.192 .232 -.185 .180	3.190 3.906 -3.074 3.030	.002 <.001 .002 .003
5	Neglectful behavior Parental age (30 years old or younger) Socio-emotional and moral development Nationality (Turkish) Education level (able to read and write or graduated from primary school) <i>F_{5,240} = 10.472, p < .01, R = 0.423, R² = 0.179</i>	.581 15.203 -.377 7.566 6.928	.190 4.171 .123 3.153 3.048	.183 .216 -.183 .146 .138	3.057 3.644 -3.054 2.400 2.273	.002 <.001 .003 .017 .024

Table 4.

Stepwise Regression Analysis Results Related to the Prediction of Behavioral Problems in Children

Note. Only the significant β values from each model are shown.

Models	Variables	B	St. Error B	β	t	p
1	Number of children <i>F</i> _{1,244} = 13.427, <i>p</i> <.01, <i>R</i> = 0.228, <i>R</i> ² = 0.052	-1.551	.423	-.228	-3.664	<.001
2	Number of children Behavioral problems in children <i>F</i> _{2,243} = 14.453, <i>p</i> <.01, <i>R</i> = 0.326, <i>R</i> ² = 0.106	-1.6859 -.113	.413 .029	-.244 -.233	-4.020 -3.837	<.001 <.001
3	Number of children Behavioral problems in children Duration of stay of Syrian families in Turkey (6 years or more) <i>F</i> _{2,242} = 12.897, <i>p</i> <.01, <i>R</i> = 0.371, <i>R</i> ² = 0.138	-1.935 -.105 -5.400	.417 .029 1.815	-.285 -.217 .183	-4.645 -3.613 2.975	<.001 <.001 .003
4	Number of children Behavioral problems in children Duration of stay of Syrian families in Turkey (6 years or more) Neglectful behaviors <i>F</i> _{4,241} =11.762, <i>p</i> <.01, <i>R</i> = 0.404, <i>R</i> ² = 0.163	-1.918 -.086 5.638 -.253	.411 .030 1.794 .093	-.282 -.177 .191 -.165	-4.662 -2.898 3.142 -2.710	<.001 .004 .002 .007
5	Number of children Behavioral problems in children Duration of stay of Syrian families in Turkey (6 years or more) Neglectful behaviors Nationality (Turkish) <i>F</i> _{5,240} =10.625, <i>p</i> <.01, <i>R</i> = 0.426, <i>R</i> ² = 0.181	-1.583 -.092 9.727 -.252 5.219	.433 .029 2.519 .093 2.278	-.233 -1.89 .330 -.164 .208	-3.654 -3.112 3.861 -2.722 2.291	<.001 .002 <.001 .007 .023
6	Number of children Behavioral problems in children Duration of stay of Syrian families in Turkey (6 years or more) Duration of stay of Syrian families in Turkey (2-5 years) Neglectful behaviors Nationality (Turkish) <i>F</i> _{6,239} =14.102, <i>p</i> <.01, <i>R</i> = 0.511, <i>R</i> ² = 0.261	-1.307 -.086 20.665 19.493 -.298 16.440	.416 .028 3.219 3.826 .089 3.090	-.192 -.178 .701 .415 -.194 .655	-3.143 -3.072 6.421 5.095 -3.365 5.320	.002 .002 <.001 <.001 .001 <.001