Analyzing the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy Perception of Mothers and Their Communication With Their Preschool Children

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In this study, the relationship between mothers’ self-efficacy perception and their communication with their children has been analyzed. Ninety-four mothers having children in preschool period constitute the sample of the study. Relational survey model has been used and Berkeley Parenting Self-Efficacy Scale Preschool Version (BPSE-PV) and Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) have been used as data collection tools. According to the results of the research, it has been found that there is a significant positive relationship between mothers’ maternal strategies, family investments in children’s potential, total self-efficacy perception, and being able to have a close relationship with their children. It has been also determined that there is a significant negative relationship between mothers’ maternal strategies, their total self-efficacy perception, and mothers’ conflict with their children. It has been concluded that mothers’ self-efficacy levels have significantly predicted their relationship status with their children both in Intimacy and Conflict sub-dimensions.

Keywords: preschool, maternal self-efficacy, parent-child relationship

Introduction

Self-efficacy is defined as a self-perception of one’s ability to perform competently and effectively in a particular task or setting (Kendall & Bloomfield, 2005). Parental self-efficacy can be defined as the belief of fulfilling our duties as a mother or father. Teti and Gelfand (1991) defined parental self-efficacy as level of effectiveness that a family perceives when they fulfill their family roles. Parental self-efficacy is also defined as the ability to support the development and success of a child (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001). Jones and Prinz (2005) stated that parental self-efficacy significantly predicts positive family behaviors. According to Gross and Rocissano (1988), parents’ belief of self-efficacy is the belief in their ability to effectively manage the various circumstances and duties of the parental life. Individuals with high self-efficacy rely on their abilities when they face with challenges and requests of society. They exhibit less negative emotions when they encounter with stress and they are decisive and determined (Jerusalem & Mittag, 1995, as cited in Weaver, Shaw, Dishion, & Wilson, 2008). In contrast, individuals with low self-efficacy are anxious, they avoid challenges and perceive challenges as a threat to themselves (Weaver et al., 2008). There is a relationship between high parental self-efficacy and greater satisfaction of family, effective parenting, and self-efficacy of family in many tasks they undertake (Coleman & Karraker, 2000). Belsky (1984) indicated that personality development of the

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mother and children’s characteristics and social support factors influence the mother’s perception of parenting-oriented self-efficacy. In the study by Suzuki (2010), these factors were identified as support from spouse, mother-in-law, and friends and also low stress level. In addition, factors, such as parental stress, satisfaction with marriage, and family functions are also predictor variables of parenting scores (Sevigny & Loutzenhiser, 2010).

Whether children benefit from family interaction as needed depends on parents’ healthy attitudes toward their children (Çağdaş, 2002). Many parents’ knowledge about parenting may consist of their own observation and experience acquired from their own parents. However, parenting-oriented self-efficacy perception is also influenced by parental attitude and behaviors. In a previous study, it was found that there is a relationship between mothers’ parenting and maternal self-efficacy (Jackson & Huang, 2000). Several studies have shown that there is a relationship between maternal self-efficacy perception and mothers’ self-respect, mental health, and adaptation to parenting and also it affects children’s all developmental areas (Coleman & Karraker, 2003; Condrad, Gross, Fogg, & Ruchala, 1992; Holden & Banez, 1996; Jones & Prinz, 2005). In several studies, it has been concluded that high parental self-efficacy is related to sensitivity to the children’s needs (Donovan & Leavitt, 1985; Donovan, Leavitt, & Walsh, 1997; Unger & Wandersman, 1985, as cited in Coleman & Karraker, 2000), direct parenting interaction (Mash & Johnston, 1983; as cited in Coleman & Karraker, 2000), active parental coping orientation (Wells-Parker, Miller, & Topping, 1990), and perception of children’s behavioral problems (Johnston & Marsh, 1989, as cited in Coleman & Karraker, 2000). However, low parenting self-efficacy is found to be related to parental depression (Cutrona & Troutman, 1986, as cited in Coleman & Karraker, 2000; Teti & Gelfand, 1991), parents’ defensive and controlling behaviors (Donovan, Leavitt, & Walsh, 1990), existence of children’s behavioral problems (Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978, as cited in Coleman & Karraker, 2000), parental perception of child difficulty (Bugental & Shennum, 1984; Halpern, Anders, Coll, & Hua, 1994, as cited in Coleman & Karraker, 2000), high levels of parental stress, and passive ways of coping with parental role (Wells-Parker et al., 1990).

Mothers with high self-efficacy are supposed to have a healthy mother-child relationship, because parental self-efficacy predicts mothers’ discipline style (Sanders & Woolley, 2005). Mother-child relationship is considered to be a reciprocal interactive process in which child and mother affect each other rather than as a unilateral effect from parent to child. However, it is natural that parents have an influence on their children, especially considering the fact that parents with young children control their children’s daily routines and parents have more mature characters and structured thinking and action patterns besides childhood is the period of fast learning and flexibility (Maccoby, 2002). Interaction in family is related to children’s anxiety and problem behaviors (Hill & Bush, 2001).

Secured attachment, which is the fundamental to the mother-baby relationship, is a cornerstone for children’s social and emotional development. A secured and caring attachment contributes significantly to children’s self-respect, peer relations, problem-solving skills, and self-control (Hortaçsu, 2003). The most significant experiences of childhood period are based on the relationship with parents. Related research indicates that a supportive relationship between babies, young children, and adults has concrete and long-term influence on children’s social, emotional, and cognitive development beside a healthy mother-child relationship is a pre-indication of the child’s school maturity (Zeanah & Doyle Zeanah, 2001; Kaplan-Sanoff, 2000). Seçer, Gülay Ogelman, Önder, and Berengi (2012) stated that mothers’ self-efficacy perception significantly predicts children’s level of aggressiveness, exclusion, fearful anxiety, hyperactivity, and peer abuse. Büyüktaşkapu
(2012) found that there is a significant relationship between mother’s self-efficacy, social skills, and self-care development.

When the studies regarding to this subject in Turkey are reviewed, it can be seen that there are studies analyzing mothers’ self-efficacy levels (Zembat, Uyanık Balat, Çinko, Şengül, & Acar, 2008), the relationship between mothers’ self-efficacy and their children’s expressive language development (İ. H. Diken & O. Diken, 2008), the relationship between mothers’ self-efficacy perception and the development of their at-risk babies (Aksoy & Diken, 2009), and the relationship between mothers’ self-efficacy perception and the development of their one to three years old children (Büyüktaşkapu, 2012). However, in Turkey, there is not any study analyzing mothers’ self-efficacy and their communication with their children. Thus, the present study investigates whether there is a significant relationship between mothers’ self-efficacy perception and the relationship with their children and whether mothers’ self-efficacy perception predicts their relationship with their children.

Methods

Research Design

Relational survey model has been used in this research. Relational survey models are research models which aim at measuring the presence or the level of covariance among two or more variables (Karasar, 2005).

Sample Group

The sample of the study consisted of 94 mothers whose children continue their education at eight different preschool education institutions in Anatolian and European side of Istanbul Province, which is chosen by simple random sampling method. Regarding the gender of the children, 46.8% (N = 44) of these children are girls and 53.2% (N = 50) of them are boys. Regarding the educational background of the children, 44.7% (N = 42) of the mothers have children who had preschool education before and 55.3% (N = 52) of them have children who have preschool education for the first time. Of the 94 participating mothers, 31.9% (N = 30) of them aged between 25 and 30 years old, 34% (N = 32) of them are between 31 and 35, and 34% (N = 32) are between 36 and 40. Concerning their educational background, 38.3% (N = 36) of the mothers are primary school graduates, 36.2% (N = 34) are secondary school graduates, and 25.5% (N = 24) are high school or university graduates. About half of the mothers (48.6%; N = 46) have two children, 39.4% (N = 37) have only one child, 9.6% (N = 9) have three children, and 2.1% (N = 2) have four or more children. Children’s mean age is 63.51 months old and standard deviation value is 7.49.

Data Collection Tools

Berkeley Parenting Self-Efficacy Scale Preschool Version (BPSE-PV). The scale was developed by Susan Halloway (2005). It was adapted into Turkish by Zembat et al. (2008) and validity and reliability studies were conducted. The scale evaluates the self-efficacy levels of the parents in four main areas:

1. Promoting cognitive behavior by teaching to reveal some special abilities so that the children can help themselves (Example: To teach how to count);
2. Promoting social development by teaching the rules (Example: To teach how to greet/meet people properly);
3. Establishing a close emotional relationship with the child (Example: To understand the child’s feelings);
4. Generally observing and promoting children’s relationship with others (Example: To provide opportunities for them to play with other children).
BPSE-PV has two sub-scales. In the first part of the scale, there are eight questions and these questions are for evaluating each mother’s self-efficacy sense in her child-directed behavior. This sub-scale has been named as “Maternal Strategy”. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value for Maternal Strategy has been calculated as 0.826 and the explained variance has been calculated as 53.66%. The scale consists of two sub-dimensions, “regarding the child as an individual” and “emotional control”, which has 0.765 and 0.611 Cronbach’s alpha value respectively. In the second part of the scale, there are 12 questions and these questions are for evaluating the self-efficacy sense of each mother in teaching the age-appropriate duties to her child. This part is “Family Investments in Children’s Potential” sub-scale and KMO value of this sub-scale has been calculated as 0.887 and the explained variance has been calculated as 47.44%. As a result of factor analysis, this part of the scale consists of two sub-dimensions, “supporting the societal skills” and “supporting the personal skills”, which has 0.819 and 0.636 Cronbach’s alpha value respectively. The scale is a 6-point Likert scale which is evaluated as 1—“Absolutely not adequate” and 6—“Absolutely adequate”. Higher scores reflect higher levels of self-efficacy and lower scores show lower levels of self-efficacy. As part of the present study, Cronbach’s alpha values of the scale have been re-analyzed and it has been calculated as 0.757 for Maternal Strategy sub-scale, 0.866 for Family Investments in Children’s Potential sub-scale, and 0.892 for the total score of the scale.

Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS). The CPRS scale was developed by Robert C. Pianta in 1992 to understand the parent-child relationship and adapted from Teacher-Child Relationship Scale which was also developed by Pianta. It was benefited from Attachment Theory and Attachment Q-Set (Waters & Deane, 1985, as cited in Zhang & Chen, 2010). The scale, which consists of 30 items, is a 5-point Likert scale. Parents’ perception of the relationship with their children is evaluated between the expressions 1—“Certainly not” and 5—“Certainly”. The original scale (CPRS) consists of three sub-dimensions. Conflict sub-dimension has 14, Intimacy sub-dimension has 10, and Dependency sub-dimension has six items. In the previous researches, reliability of Dependency sub-dimension was indicated to be low (Pianta, 1992, as cited in Zhang & Chen, 2010). Intimacy sub-dimension measures if parents can create an open and affectionate relationship (Example: We share a warm and affectionate relationship with my child). Conflict sub-dimension measures if parents perceive a negative relationship with the child (Example: We seem to be in a continuous conflict with my child). A high score in Intimacy sub-dimension means a positive and intimate parent-child relationship, whereas a high score in Conflict sub-dimension points out a high conflict tendency in parent-child relationship (Zhang & Chen, 2010). In the adaptation of the scale into Turkish by Saygı (2011), Turkish and English forms were carried out with 15 parents every other week to evaluate the linguistic equivalence. Data were analyzed with Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test. To determine the construct validity of the scale, factor analysis was applied and two-factored 17 questions were acquired. It was observed that the factor loading varies between 0.409 and 0.725. The scale adapted into Turkish is two-factored. It has been found that the first factor explains 26.5% of the total variance related to scale, the second factor explains 11.2% of it, and the total variance of both factors is 37.8%. The first factor was determined as Conflict sub-dimension and the second factor was determined as Intimacy sub-dimension. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of internal consistency of the scale was measured as 0.80. After the correction of Spearman-Brown and Guttman split-half, the correlation between the two parts of the scale is 0.757 and 0.749. All findings show that the scale has linguistic equivalence, reliability, and validity.

Information form. The information form developed by the researcher includes six questions regarding each mother’s age, education level, her child’s gender, number of siblings, etc..
Data Collection

First of all, teachers that accept to participate in the study were interviewed. They were informed about the aim of the study and the data collection tools. Both of the data collection tools were delivered to the mothers by the teachers. The study was based on volunteering. Data collection tools were delivered to 100 mothers who accepted to participate in the study. Due to incomplete filling of the scale items and unreturned scales, the analysis of the study was conducted through data of 94 mothers. Data collection was completed in about two months.

Data Analysis

The data of the research have been analyzed in the packaged software of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). In this study, the correlations between self-efficacy of the mothers having children in preschool period and parent-child relationship have been analyzed and also Simple Linear Regression Analysis related to prediction level has been carried out (Alpar, 2010; Baykul & Güzeller, 2013; Büyükoztürk, 2009).

Results

In this section, the answers to the research questions are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1 demonstrates that the mean score from BPSE-PV for Maternal Strategy sub-scale is 5.11; and for Family Investments in Children’s Potential sub-scale is 5.24; and the total mean score for the BPSE-PV is 5.19. In addition, it was found that the mean score from CPRS for Intimacy sub-dimension is 22.30; and for Conflict sub-dimension is 31.27.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BPSE-PV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maternal Strategy</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Investments in Children’s Potential</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>0.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy total</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPRS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>22.30</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>31.27</td>
<td>9.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 demonstrates that it has been found a significant positive relationship between BPSE-PV Maternal Strategy sub-scale and CPRS Intimacy sub-dimension \( (r = 0.401; \ p < 0.01) \) and a significant negative relationship between Maternal Strategy sub-scale and Conflict sub-dimension \( (r = -0.297; \ p < 0.01) \). There is a significant positive relationship between BPSE-PV Family Investments in Children’s Potential sub-scale and CPRS Intimacy sub-dimension \( (r = 0.551; \ p < 0.01) \) and a significant negative relationship between Family Investments in Children’s Potential sub-scale and Conflict sub-dimension \( (r = -0.466; \ p < 0.01) \). There has been also found that there is a significant positive relationship between BPSE-PV total score and CPRS Intimacy sub-dimension \( (r = 0.534; \ p < 0.01) \) and a significant negative relationship between Family Investments in Children’s Potential sub-scale and Conflict sub-dimension \( (r = -0.434; \ p < 0.01) \). In other words, higher self-efficacy level of mothers means more intimacy with their children and lower self-efficacy level of mothers means more conflict with their children.

As shown in Table 3, Maternal Strategy sub-scale of BPSE-PV explains 16.1% of changes in the Intimacy sub-dimension of CPRS \( (R = 0.401; \ R^2 = 0.161; \ F = 17.643; \ p < 0.001) \). In addition to this result, Maternal
Strategy sub-scale explains 8.8% of the changes in Conflict sub-dimension of CPRS (R = 0.297; R^2 = 0.088; F = 8.871; p < 0.001).

Table 2
The Correlation Between BPSE-PV Sub-scales and CPRS Sub-dimensions (N = 94)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Intimacy</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Strategy</td>
<td>0.401</td>
<td>-0.297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Investments in Children’s Potential</td>
<td>0.551</td>
<td>-0.466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley Parenting Self-Efficacy Total</td>
<td>0.534</td>
<td>-0.434</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < 0.01.

Table 3
The Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis Between BPSE-PV Sub-scales and CPRS Sub-dimensions (N = 94)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Intimacy</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Strategy</td>
<td>0.401</td>
<td>-0.297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Investments in Children’s Potential</td>
<td>0.551</td>
<td>-0.466</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R^2</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>0.401</td>
<td>4.200</td>
<td>0.401</td>
<td>0.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>-0.297</td>
<td>-2.978</td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td>0.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>0.551</td>
<td>6.327</td>
<td>0.551</td>
<td>0.303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>-0.466</td>
<td>-5.046</td>
<td>0.466</td>
<td>0.217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < 0.001.

It has been found that Family Investments in Children’s Potential sub-scale of BPSE-PV has significantly predicted 30.3% of the changes in Intimacy sub-dimension of CPRS (R = 0.551; R^2 = 0.303; F = 40.037; p < 0.001) and 21.7% of the changes in Conflict sub-dimension of CPRS (R = 0.466; R^2 = 0.217; F = 25.467; p < 0.001).

That is to say, while 16.1% of Intimacy variable total variance and 8.8% Conflict variable total variance have been explained with Maternal Strategy variable, 30.3% of the total variance related to Intimacy variable and 21.7% of the total variance related to Conflict variable have been explained with Family Investments in Children’s Potential variable. According to these results, it can be said that the self-efficacy levels of parents are significant predictors in parent-child relationship. In addition to all these findings, according to results of t-test related to regression coefficient, values in BPSE-PV sub-scales have significantly predicted the values in CPRS sub-dimensions.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this part, the findings regarding the purposes of the study are discussed based on the review of the literature. The mean score of BPSE-PV is 5.19. Referring the mean scores, it can be said that mothers’ parental self-efficacy perception is high in both sub-dimensions and total scores. This is because maximum score which mothers’ can gain is 6 from BPSE-PV (Zembat et al., 2008). In a recent study, it was also found that mothers’ self-efficacy scores were high (Salonen, Kaunonen, Astedt-Kurki, Järvenpää, Isoaho, & Tarkka, 2009). Likewise, the mean scores of CPRS are similar to the mean scores of mothers having same age children in the study done by Saygı and Uyanık Balat (2013). In this case, calculated medium scores are consistent with the field research.
One of the basic questions of the research is whether there is a significant relation between self-efficacy of parents and parent-child relationship. Following the analysis, it has been found that there is a positive significant relationship between parents’ self-efficacy and intimacy with their children, and a negative significant relationship between parents’ self-efficacy and conflict with their children. In other words, mothers with high self-efficacy have more intimate relationship and less conflict with their children. In a previous study, it was found that mothers’ use of justification, resolution, and mitigation in conflict predicted less conflict with their children and high levels of social and emotional development for children (Laible & Thompson, 2002). Likewise, it was established that mothers who have good communication with their children have less conflict with them (Dixon, Graber, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008). It was also determined that mothers with negative feelings show less guidance and more control toward their children. Children who are exposed to these behaviors exhibit more non-compliant behaviors (Braungart-Rieker, Garwood, & Stifter, 1997). When looking at the reasons of conflicts between mothers and their children, it was found that conflict interactions were influenced by context of interaction, family, maternal, and child temperamental factors (Huang, Teti, Caughy, Feldstein, & Genevro, 2007). In addition, children’s internalizing family values, positive strategies used in conflict resolution, and management of disappointments are other factors that have an impact on conflict process (Hoffman, 1983, as cited in Huang et al., 2007). It would appear that family’s style of interaction with the child is a significant variable. This style of interaction can cause us to think parental self-efficacy factor. This study’s finding of mothers with high self-efficacy having less conflict and more intimacy with their children can be evaluated in this context. In other words, it can be stated that parents who can develop appropriate style of interaction with their children provide this style of interaction by means of their self-efficacy.

In other words, a significant positive relationship is found between caring child as an individual and maternal strategy evaluations based on emotional controlling and the sub-dimension of Family Investments in Children’s Potential consisted of evaluations based on fulfilling child’s individual skills and between total of parental self-efficacy perception and parental full of love and open relationship with the child. This finding can be interpreted as higher parental self-efficacy means closer relationship with the child. Relationship between child and family is shaped by factors such as intimacy, level of negativity, or disengagement (Cahill, Deater-Deckard, Pike, & Hughes, 2007). In a previous study, it was stated that there is a significant negative relationship between mother-child relationship quality and internalizing behavior problems of children and it was also found that this affects children’s self-esteem (Kim & Cicchetti, 2004). Likewise, a relation was found between mother-child relationship and children’s academic success (Simpkins, Weiss, McCartney, Kreider, & Dearing, 2006). It can be stated that families who feel competent use more supportive parental strategies and these strategies support children’s social, psychological, and academic development. In addition, parental self-efficacy directly affects children’s success through modeling attitudes and confidence. Families with low self-efficacy have difficulty in using supportive family strategies and are not able to resist when faced with challenges (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001).

The results indicated a negative significant relationship between parents’ total self-efficacy perception, parents’ self-efficacy perception related to maternal strategy and family investments in children’s potential, and Conflict scale of the parent-child relationship. This finding shows that if the perception level of parental self-efficacy is low, the relationship with children can be affected negatively. It has been determined that families who have a low perception of self-efficacy use harsh discipline methods and pressure to control their children’s behaviors (Mash, Johnson, & Kovitz, 1983).
Another problem of the study is whether parental self-efficacy predicts parent-child relationship. The results show that sub-dimension of Maternal Strategy of the BPSE-PV, which constitutes the total parental self-efficacy, explains 16.1% of change in the Intimacy sub-dimension of CPRS and 8.8% of the change in Conflict sub-dimension. It has been found that sub-dimension of Family Investments in Children’s Potential, which is another sub-dimension of total parental self-efficacy, has significantly predicted 30.3% of the change in Intimacy sub-dimension of CPRS and 21.7% of the change in Conflict sub-dimension. Here, it can be said that parents’ level of self-efficacy is a significant predictor of the quality of relationship with their children.

The studies conducted in the Europe and United States show that parents who have higher self-efficacy also have more positive, competent, and consistent interaction with their children (L. G. Anthony, B. J. Anthony, Glanville, Naiman, Waanders, & Shaffer, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Oettingen, 1995; Teti & Gelfand, 1991; Wells-Parker et al., 1990). Intimacy, appropriate care, and healthy parent-child relationship affect children’s social and emotional development, social competence, and emotion regulation skills (Cole, Teti, & Zahn-Waxler, 2003). Likewise, inappropriate and negative parent-child relationship may cause emotional and behavioral problems in children (Deater-Deckard & Petrill, 2004). Greenough, Emde, Gunnar, Massinga, and Shonkoff (2001) stated that nurturing and sensitive adult-child interactions are crucial for the development of trust, empathy, compassion, generosity, and conscience and these relationships provide a context for supporting the development of the skills, such as self-direction, persistence, cooperation, caring, and conflict resolution skills. In conclusion, the findings of the present study confirm that mothers’ parental self-efficacy perception is a factor which both predicts and directly affects the relationship with their children. Field specialists may be recommended to take notice and consider these findings regarding the studies about parental self-efficacy and mother-child relationship.

References


