



## The Quality of the Parent-Child Relationship and Children's Family, School and Social Competences in Cyprus

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### Abstract

The present study focuses on the effects of parenting practices on children's family relations, school performance, social competence and children's self-esteem based on the theoretical perspective of Rohner's Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PART). Our research considered parental demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, income) as independent variables to study their impact on parental practices and on the ways that these affect children's family relations, school performance, social competence and children's self-esteem. The Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ-mother and father version) and the Questionnaire of children's family relations, school performance, social competence and children's self-esteem were administered to parents. The sample consisted of 336 fathers (77) and mothers (259) from Cyprus. Results indicated that parental acceptance, expressed through warmth, affection and loving behaviour is positively correlated with improved children's family relations, higher school performance, better social competence and higher children's self-esteem. On the other hand, parental rejection expressed through hurtful psychological and physical behaviours, affect children's self-esteem and competences (school performance, socialization). Results showed that when both fathers and mothers displayed more acceptance and warmth their children tended toward better psychological adjustment.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Parental Acceptance and Rejection Theory

According to Carrasco and Rohner (2013) as well as Rohner and Khaleque (2010) the Parental Acceptance and Rejection Theory (PART) includes four dimensions, namely warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect and undifferentiated rejection. Parental warmth/affection concerns physical and verbal expressions of love toward their children, whereas hostility/aggression refers to feelings of anger or dissatisfaction, which can be expressed through physical or verbal aggression towards children (Campo & Rohner, 1992; Ronald, 2004). Parents described as indifferent/neglectful are emotionally unavailable to the child, also characterized by a lack of concern and interest and unable to satisfy the basic needs of the child (Khaleque, Rohner, Riaz, Laukkala, & Sadeque, 2007; Tsaousis, Giovazolias, & Mascha, 2012). In the same theoretical framework hostility and indifference refer to the deeper feelings and attitudes of parents, while aggression and neglect refer to observed behaviours as a result of those feelings and attitudes (Rohner & Rohner, 1980). Finally, undifferentiated rejection refers to the belief that the important caregivers (parents) are not really interested in their children, although there is no evidence that the caregiver is aggressive, indifferent or neglectful (Rohner, 2005a).

According to the PART-Theory each person could be placed on this continuum (acceptance - rejection), depending on his or her experiences by the important caregivers (Campo & Rohner, 1992). Parental acceptance is expressed through warmth, affection, care, concern and support, whereas parental rejection, is

characterized by a variety of behaviours that harm children physically and psychologically such as abuse, neglect, harsh punishments, intimidation and indifference (Rohner, 2005a; Rohner & Khaleque, 2013).

Research results indicate that children who feel discarded by their parents have poor school performance (Rohner & Khaleque, 2013; Ronald, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2005). Children who have been abused and rejected by their parents have difficulty creating satisfactory social relationships with their peers with an impact on their self-esteem (Campo & Rohner, 1992). Consequently, they face more difficulties in their social competence, they become more hostile (Kim, Cain, & McCubbin, 2006) and they experience psychological pain due to the perceived parental rejection they have been exposed to Tsaousis et al. (2012). It is also argued that children who have experienced intense rejection are likely to display addictive behaviours (Khaleque, 2007; Rohner & Rohner, 1980).

Parental acceptance-rejection plays a primary and most influential role in determining children's behaviour over the life span (Khaleque & Rohner, 2012). Effective personality and psychological development of children is possible only when there is a positive parent-child relationship that begins to become established when parents provide unconditional love for the child and a regard as a special individual (Leventhal, Selner-O'Hagan, Brooks-Gunn, Bingenheimer, & Earls, 2004). Therefore, parental warmth and affection is an important ingredient in making the developmental process more effective.

### *1.2. Parental Acceptance/Rejection – Children's Competences*

Children who have experienced acceptance by their family are more likely to feel safer within their family, they feel capable, and they are able to manage hostility and aggression. Furthermore, they have emotional stability, they are independent and they have a positive perspective on the world and life (Kim & Rohner, 2002).

On the other hand, children who are raised in an unstable family environment have a sense of insecurity and low self-esteem, feel anger, and they are incapable of creating effective interpersonal relationships (Patterson, Mockford, & Stewart-Brown, 2005). The way that children are brought up and the quality of the parent-child relationship seem to determine children's emotional and behavioural problems. Stewart-Brown, Fletcher, and Wadsworth (2005) argue that improving the quality of poor parent-child relationships may be a key factor in preventing a child's general health in adulthood. According to McMahan (2006) changes in parents' behaviour can lead to changes in children's behaviour.

Georgiou (1993); Milonakou-Keke (2007); Papageorgiou (2007) and Spera (2006) argue that there is a positive correlation between children's learning process and parental support. Researchers postulate that the supportive family provides learning stimuli to the children that play a key role in shaping the child's behaviour and personality. Through the family, the child becomes active and participates in school education with parents as role models; consequently, parental behaviour is defined as an important factor that has an impact on the child and on its scholarly learning process.

Flouris (2004) states that the parents' attitudes, expectations, socialization methods and values regarding their children's personal competences and school performance play a decisive role in the children's school success. He also argues that a positive and supportive family environment has a positive impact on the academic performance of children, while on the other hand strict control or pressure can have negative effects to children's behaviour and school performance.

Kaila (1997) in her research on parenting practices and children's school learning found that children who had "low" performance at school, lived in a family environment which was characterized by indifference, impotence, minimal involvement, emphasis on punishment, strict control and obedience, as well as low rates of interaction with children. On the other hand, children who showed "high" performance at school lived in a family environment that was characterized by flexibility, communication and the encouragement of initiative.

Georgiou (1996) research examined the impact of parental practices on school performance. His results indicated that parental practices in children with excellent school performance were based on dialogue and encouragement of the child's initiative while parents engaged in peer support during the educational process. On the contrary, it appeared that parental practices in children with poor schooling were based on threats, raised voices, punishments, and deficits both in the emotional support as well as in the encouragement of the children. It is found that democratic parenting practices are associated with children's enhanced school performance, as the child becomes more autonomous and independent and has a good social adjustment. Children of authoritative parents, have a high self-esteem, are cooperative and rely on their own strengths. At the same time, they develop and display a positive attitude towards school and they achieve high levels in their school performance (Boon, 2007; Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2008; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989).

Spera (2005); Spera (2006); Strage and Brandt (1999) also found that authoritative parenting has a positive correlation with children's school achievements. Authoritative parents provide warmth, affection, emotional security, and help their children develop and enhance their verbal ability through interaction, reasoning, discussion, and sharing with the child in ways that enhance school competence and success. Authoritative parenting practices are associated with positive psychosocial development, the development of social skills, self-esteem and autonomy as well as the academic / school ability of the child (Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993; Hein & Lewko, 1994; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Newman, Harrison, Dashiff, & Davies, 2008; Noller & Callan, 1990).

Children of permissive parents are characterized by a lower level of social skills, display impulsive behaviour and hardly rely on their strengths. Due to the lack of control, guidance through the low involvement of parents in their children’s life, children experience problems in the school environment that are manifested by poor performance and learning difficulties (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Pappa, 2006).

The present study aims to explore parenting practices, parents’ perceived acceptance or rejection of their child/children, and the influence of parenting practices on children’s family relations, school performance, social competences and self-esteem. Our study explored the following two hypotheses:

1. Parents’ demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education and income, impact parental practices and influence children’s family relations, school performance, social competences and children’s self-esteem.
2. Parental child-rearing practices predict children’s, family relations, school performance, social competences and children’s self-esteem.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Sample

The study took place in Cyprus, more specifically in the southern city of Limassol with urban population of 183,658 and a metropolitan population of 239.842<sup>1</sup>. Our participants were 336 Greek speaking parents who have children in the ages six to twelve years old and are pupils in public primary schools. The majority of our sample was mothers (77.1%) whereas fathers constituted 22.9% of the participants. The mean age of the fathers was 37 and the mean age of mothers was 35 years old. At the time the survey took place the majority of our sample (74.1%) were married and had one or two offspring (85.4%). Most of our participants (70.2%) resided in urban areas and about one third of the sample (29.8%) lived in rural areas. Regarding the family income, more than half of the participants (62.2%) had a monthly income between 1501-3000 Euros, followed by 25.6% with a monthly income of 3000+ Euros. Only 12.2% of our subjects belonged to low income families with 1500 Euros or less per month. The majority of our participants had achieved a secondary level of education (75,3%) Table 1.

**Table-1.** Participants’ distribution and socio-demographic variables (in percentage).

Socio-demographic characteristics n=336			Socio-demographic characteristics n=336		
Demographic variables	n	%	Demographic variables	n	%
Gender			Participant’s educational level	n	%
Father	77	22.9	Secondary level	253	75.3
Mother	259	77.1	University level	83	24.7
Marital Status	n	%	Family income	n	%
Married (two parents)	249	74.1	0-1500	41	12.2
Not married	87	25.9	1501-3000	209	62.2
Residence	n	%	3001+	86	25.6
Urban	236	70.2	Number of children	n	%
Rural	100	29.8	1	128	38.1
Child’s gender	n	%	2	159	47.3
Boy	196	58.3	3	36	10.7
Girl	140	41.7	4+	13	3.9

### 2.2. Procedure – Data Collection

All our participating parents completed a Personal Information Form, the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ-mother and father version) and the Questionnaire of children’s family relations, school performance, social competence and children’s self-esteem. The data were collected through face-to-face meetings held with groups of parents at children’s local school(s). Parents were informed by the researchers about the purpose and the structure of the research as well as the rating scales of the instruments before they began to fill out the questionnaires. During the data collection process fathers and mothers were separated and they were reminded to answer all the questions with reference to their child who was a pupil at the school.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/populationcondition\\_21main\\_gr/populationcondition\\_21main\\_gr?OpenForm&sub=1&sel=4](https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/populationcondition_21main_gr/populationcondition_21main_gr?OpenForm&sub=1&sel=4) [accessed 15/04/2020].

### 2.3. Instruments

The parents of our sample completed two (2) questionnaires, both in their native language, namely the Greek version of the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ-mother and father version) (Ronald, 2004) and the Questionnaire of children’s family relations, school performance, social competence and children’s self-esteem (Kontopoulou, 2008).

In addition, a short demographic questionnaire was used to collect information about the participant’s age, gender, marital status, residence, family income, and educational level, number of children and children’s age and gender.

#### 2.3.1. Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ-Mother and Father Version) (Ronald, 2004)

The Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) is a self-report questionnaire which is used when parents (maternal and paternal) want to reflect on their current accepting-rejecting behaviours toward their child (Ronald & Ali, 2016). The questionnaire (PARQ-parent version) explores parental behaviour as they perceive their relationship with their children (Ronald, 2004).

The instrument consists of four scales: The first scale is warmth and affection or coldness and lack of affection, when reverse scored and the second scale refers to hostility and aggression. The third scale is indifference and neglect, where the value of the answer to item 16 is also reversed. The fourth and last scale is undifferentiated rejection. Scores on these scales are summed after reverse scoring the entire warmth/affection scale to create a measure of perceived coldness and lack of affection and after reverse scoring called-for items on the indifference/neglect scale.

Possible scores on the short version range from a low of 24 (maximum perceived acceptance) through a high of 96 (maximum perceived rejection)<sup>2</sup>.

The questionnaire scores range as follows: Warmth/Affection Scale 8-32 (mean 20), hostility and aggression 6-24 (mean 15), indifference and neglect 6-24 (mean 15) and Undifferentiated Rejection 4-16 (mean 10). A score that is below the average mean indicates reduced rejection, hostility and neglect Table 2.

**Table-2.** Score parental acceptance and rejection questionnaire.

Parq	Low	High	Mean
Affection / Warmth	8	32	20
Hostility/ Aggression	6	24	15
Indifference Neglect	6	24	15
Undifferentiated Rejection	4	16	10
Overall	24	96	60

Source: Handbook Parental acceptance and Rejection, Ronald (2004); Rohner (2008).

#### 2.3.2. Questionnaire of Family Relations, School Performance, Social Competence and Self-Esteem for Children (Kontopoulou, 2008)

The questionnaire aims to explore developmental characteristics for the children 7-12 years old and includes 31 questions that record the child's overall self-esteem scale as perceived by their parent.

The questionnaire distinguishes three factors: The first factor is family competences and refers to the satisfaction that the child receives from family relationships (e.g. I am supportive of my child; I have excessive demands on my child). Second factor is social competences and refers to one's relationships with peers (e.g. my child makes friendships easy). Third factor is school competences and refers to assessing the children's performance and adaptation to school context (e.g. my child has difficulty in school lessons, other children do better than my child.). The questions that need to be reverse scored are 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 26 and 28. The higher score on each factor illustrates children's competences in that factor. The sum indicates the score of children's self-esteem by summing up the points that arise from the questions included in each factor (school, family and social).

### 2.4. Data Analysis

The data were analysed with the SPSS 25.0 package programme. Data analysis included descriptive statistics as mean, standard deviation, frequencies, percentage to describe participants’ characteristics. Distributions of frequencies and percentages were calculated in order to analyse data obtained from the parents’ personal information form.

In order to examine our first research hypothesis, we applied the two-way Anova and multivariate Anova (Manova) to compare means between parental practices, parent’s demographic characteristics and their impact on children’s self-esteem, family relations, school performance and social competences. Pearson’s correlation coefficient was used to explore whether correlations (positive or negative) could be found between parental practices and children’s family relations, school performance, social competence and children’ self-esteem. For the examination of our second research hypotheses, we applied the statistical regression analysis in order to

<sup>2</sup> (Handbook of Parental Acceptance and Rejection, Ronald (2004); Rohner (2008)).

explore whether parental child-rearing practices can predict children’s family relations, school performance, social competences and children’s self-esteem.

2.5. Descriptive Indicators and Internal Consistency Values (Reliability)

Table 3 presents the descriptive indicators and the internal consistency values of the tools. The reliability of the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ-father and mother version) ranged from 0.89 to 0.96. The reliability of the four scales ranges as follows: "Warmth and affection" scale 0.96, "hostility and aggression" scale 0.92, "indifference and neglect" scale 0.90 and "undifferentiated rejection" 0.86.

The reliability of the questionnaire of "Family relations, school performance, social competence and self-esteem for children" ranges from 0.77 to 0.88. The reliability of the four factors shows for "family relations" factor 0.82, for the "social competence" factor 0.79, for the "school performance" factor 0.77 and for the "children’s self-esteem" 0.88. For Internal Consistency Values (reliability) we applied Cronbach’s alpha analysis and the results are similar to the original questionnaires Table 3.

Table-3. Descriptive indicators and values of internal consistency of tools.

Questionnaires	Authors	Our research
Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ-parent version)	Cronbach alpha	Cronbach alpha
Warmth/ Affection	0.95	0.96
Hostility / Aggression	0.93	0.92
Indifference Neglect	0.88	0.90
Undifferentiated Rejection	0.86	0.89
Overall PARQ	0.92	0.94
Questionnaire of family relations, school performance, social competence and self-esteem for children (Kontopoulou, 2008)	Cronbach alpha	Cronbach alpha
Family Relations	0.78	0.82
Social Competence	0.75	0.79
School Performance	0.77	0.77
Children’s self esteem	0.85	0.88

Source: Handbook Parental acceptance and Rejection, Ronald (2004); Rohner (2008).

Table-4. Differences between gender\*residence & income.

Dependent Variable	G	Residence	M	F	Sig	Income	M	F	Sig
Children’s self esteem	F	urban	80.25	5.724	.017	High	80.20	6.178	.013
		rural	53.92			Low	65.47		
	M	urban	66.07			High	61.66		
		rural	53.88			Low	60.54		
Family Relations	F	urban	23.26	2.748	.050	High	23.16	3.954	.048
		rural	16.61			Low	19.73		
	M	urban	19.34			High	17.98		
		rural	15.71			Low	17.88		
School Performance	F	urban	26.53	13.037	.000	High	26.40	8.807	.003
		rural	14.76			Low	20.17		
	M	urban	20.60			High	19.24		
		rural	16.73			Low	19.03		
Warmth/affec tion	F	urban	22.30	21.318	.000	High	16.65	17.336	.000
		rural	10.31			Low	10.50		
	M	urban	18.12			High	15.65		
		rural	14.25			Low	14.81		
PARQ	F	urban	40.14	3.745	.05	High	40.88	4.425	.036
		rural	57.30			Low	48.08		
	M	urban	44.83			High	47.74		
		rural	54.72			Low	48.11		
Social Competence	F	urban	24.43	0.890	.87ns	High	30.63	4.357	.038
		rural	24.45			Low	25.56		
	M	urban	23.87			High	24.43		
		rural	23.55			Low	23.61		

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Impact of Parental Demographic Characteristics on Parental Practices and on Children's Family, School, Social Competences and Self-Esteem

Fathers and mothers with higher family income stated that their children had a higher self-esteem, as well as better family, school, and social competences as compared to fathers and mothers with lower family income. Results indicated that parents with lower monthly income were significantly less affectionate to their children than fathers and mothers with higher incomes. Moreover, fathers with lower income were more rejecting towards their children than fathers with higher income. On the other hand, our results showed the reverse tendency for mothers, i.e. those with higher incomes were significantly more rejecting toward their children than those with lower incomes ( $p < 0.05$ ). Fathers and mothers who lived in urban areas stated that their children had higher self-esteem and more competence in family and school matters compared to parents living in rural areas. Mothers and fathers who lived in an urban area appeared to be more rejecting than fathers and mothers who lived in a rural area. Rural area mothers were significantly less rejecting towards their children than rural-area fathers [Table 4](#).

Age seems to play a significant role as far as parental rejection and hostility are concerned. Our findings showed that older parents were significantly less rejecting and hostile toward their children than younger parents. Additionally, they considered their children to be more competent in family relations than parents of younger children ( $p < 0, 05$ ). Furthermore, our results indicated that marital status also played a role regarding parental neglect toward children, i.e. married fathers displayed significantly less neglect toward their children than single-parent fathers. The opposite trend was the case with single-parent mothers, who according to our findings neglected their children less than those who were married [Table 5](#).

**Table-5.** Differences between gender\*age & marital status.

Dependent Variable	Gender	Age	Mean	F	Sig
Family competences	father	Younger	23.10	3.075	.05
		Older	21.53		
	mother	Younger	17.59		
		Older	18.71		
PARQ	father	Younger	43.16	14.849	.000
		Older	42.95		
	mother	Younger	48.82		
		Older	46.34		
Dependent Variable	Gender	Marital status	Mean	F	Sig
neglect	father	married	10.09	35.410	.000
		Single parent	13.36		
	mother	married	10.51		
		Single parent	9.36		
PARQ	father	married	42.28	4.320	.038
		Single parent	47.54		
	mother	married	49.27		
		Single parent	45.47		

We detected a significant negative correlation between hostility and the PART-Theory dimension of warmth and affection ( $r = -0.572$   $p < 0.000$ ), but also with the family, school and social competence ( $r = -0.669$   $p < 0.000$ ;  $r = -0.610$   $p < 0.000$  and  $r = -0.661$   $p < 0.000$  respectively) as well as with children's self-esteem ( $r = -0.674$   $p < 0.000$ ). On the other hand, hostility presented a positive correlation with the dimensions of neglect ( $r = 0.409$   $p < 0.000$ ), and rejection ( $r = 0.662$   $p < 0.000$ ).

When examining neglect as an independent variable our results indicated a negative correlation with the warmth and affection dimension ( $r = -0.473$   $p < 0.000$ ), with family ( $r = -0.438$   $p < 0.000$ ), school ( $r = -0.461$   $p < 0.000$ ), social competences ( $r = -0.408$   $p < 0.000$ ), as well as with children's self-esteem ( $r = -0.455$   $p < 0.000$ ). Neglect correlated positively with rejection ( $r = 0.569$   $p < 0.000$ ). At the same time when rejection was examined as an independent variable then it presented negative correlations with the warmth and affection dimension ( $r = -0.738$   $p < 0.000$ ), but also with family, school and social competences ( $r = -0.753$   $p < 0.000$ ;  $r = -0.780$   $p < 0.000$ ;  $r = -0.775$   $p < 0.000$ ). The same negative correlation appeared also with children's self-esteem ( $r = -0.805$   $p < 0.000$ ).

The warmth/affection was found to have a significant positive correlation with family ( $r = 0.774$   $p < 0.000$ ), school ( $r = 0.849$   $p < 0.000$ ), social competences ( $r = 0.821$   $p < 0.000$ ) and children's self-esteem ( $r = 0.854$   $p < 0.000$ ) [Table 6](#).

[Table 7](#) illustrates a statistically significant difference between the variables family relations, school performance, social competence and children's self-esteem with low/high parental acceptance and parental rejection. Participating parents who perceived themselves as more accepting also felt that their children had more family, school, social competences and a higher self-esteem. On the contrary, parents who perceived

themselves as more rejecting stated that their children had less family, school, social competence and self-esteem.

**Table-6.** Correlations between PARQ and Family relations, School performance, social Competences and Children's self esteem

Warmth	Hostility	Neglect	Rejection	PARQ	Family	School	Social	Esteem
Warmth	--							
Hostility	-.572**							
Neglect	-.473**	.409**						
Rejection	-.738**	.662**	.569**					
Parq	-.914**	.772**	.665**	.902**				
Family Relations	.774**	-.669**	-.438**	-.753**	-.825**			
School Performance	.849**	-.610**	-.461**	-.780**	-.860**	.884**		
Social Competence	.821**	-.661**	-.408**	-.775**	-.847**	.872**	.871**	
Children's Self-Esteem	.854**	-.674**	-.455**	-.805**	-.883**	.954**	.961**	.957**

Note: \*\* represents 5% level of significance respectively.

**Table-7.** Differences between (low – high scores) PARQ\*Family, School, Social Competences, Children's self-esteem.

Dependent Variable	PARQ	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig
Family Relations	24-59 (Low)	243	21.60	4.98	38.360	.000
	60-96 (High)	93	12.37	2.24		
School Performance	24-59 (Low)	243	23.62	6.17	46.036	.000
	60-96 (High)	93	12.34	2.64		
Social Competences	24-59 (Low)	243	28.74	5.93	19.002	.000
	60-96 (High)	93	17.34	3.04		
Children's self esteem	24-59 (Low)	243	73.97	15.92	48.916	.000
	60-96 (High)	93	42.06	5.80		

**3.2. Parental Practices Affection / Warmth, Hostility, Undifferentiated Rejection, Parental Neglect, as Predictive Factors of Family Relations, School Performance, Social Competence and Self-Esteem of the Child**

The multivariate regression model was statistically significant  $F(10,325) = 196.565, p < 0,000$ , interpreting 70% of the total variance ( $r^2 = .711$ , Adjusted  $r^2 = .700$ ). Parental Affection, i.e. the Warmth dimension of parenting predicted positively children's family competences, ( $\beta = 0.438 p < 0,000$ ), children's school performance and their social competences, ( $\beta = 0.522 p < 0,000$ ), as well as children's self-esteem ( $\beta = 1.788 p < 0,000$ ).

On the contrary the dimension parental Hostility/ Aggression predicted negatively children's family relations ( $\beta = -0.500 p < 0,000$ ), their school performance and social competences ( $\beta = -0.398 p < 0,000$ ), as well as children's self-esteem ( $\beta = -1.194 p < 0,000$ ). The model was statistically significant  $F(10,325) = 288.552, p < 0,000$ , interpreting 77% of the total variance ( $r^2 = .776$ , Adjusted  $r^2 = .770$ ).

Showing the same tendency as hostility/aggression the dimension Parental Indifference/ Neglect also predicted negatively children's social competences ( $\beta = -0.330 p < 0,000$ ), and children's self-esteem ( $\beta = -0.50 p < 0,05$ ). Parental neglect was not a statistically significant predictor of the children's family relations and school performance  $F(10,325) = 265.807, p < 0,000$ , interpreting 81% of the total variance ( $r^2 = .816$ , Adjusted  $r^2 = .810$ ).

**Table-8.** Regression Models predicting PARQ\*Family, School, Social Competences and Children's self-esteem.

Dependent Variable	Warmth/Affection	Hostility/Aggression	Indifference Neglect	Undifferentiated Rejection
Family Relations	0.438***	-0.500***	0.087ns	-0.468 ***
School Performance	0.522***	-0.398***	0.084ns	-0.617 ***
Social Competences	0.522***	-0.398***	-0.330***	-0.637***
Children's self esteem	1.788***	-1.194***	-0.50*	-1.722***
F	196.565	288.552	265.807	361.849
BETA	35.321	38.280	43.495	117.096
Effect Size Adjusted R2	70%	77%	76%	81%

Note: \*\*\*, \* represents 1% and 10% level of significance respectively.

The regression model was statistically significant  $F(10,325) = 361.849$ ,  $p < 0,000$ , interpreting 76% of the total variance ( $r^2 = .766$ , Adjusted  $r^2 = .760$ ). The dimension of parental Undifferentiated Rejection was found to predict negatively children's family relations ( $\beta = -0.468$   $p < 0,000$ ), children's school performance ( $\beta = -0.617$   $p < 0,000$ ), children's social competences ( $\beta = -0.637$   $p < 0,000$ ), as well as children's self-esteem ( $\beta = -1.722$   $p < 0,000$ ) [Table 8](#).

#### **4. Discussion**

*Hypothesis 1. Parents' demographic characteristics age, gender, education, income, impact parental practices and influence children's Family relations, School performance, Social Competences and children's Self-Esteem.*

The findings of the present study show a statistically significant difference between fathers and mothers in reference to their perceived display of warmth and support; namely that participating mothers showed more affection and were more supportive towards their children. Our male participants stated that their children had more self-esteem, family, social and school competence than their female counterparts. On the other hand, our findings showed that mothers spend more time than fathers raising their children.

Our findings seem to be in compliance to [Leaper \(2002\)](#). He also claims that the parent's gender affects their parenting practices, i.e. The working mother continues to bear most of the responsibility for her children's upbringing and education. According to [Phares, Fields, and Kamboukos \(2009\)](#) mothers are more expressive and supportive in their relationship with their children and express themselves more emotionally compared to fathers, who seem to be more demanding of their children. In most societies, mothers spend more time with their children than fathers. A mother is expected to spend more time to care for her children, but also to show affection and devotion, while the father is expected to provide money to the family and to be the parent who enforces discipline. In relevant findings children considered their mothers as more overprotective and affectionate than their fathers, who were seen as more distant without manifestations of love and affection ([McKinney & Renk, 2008a](#)).

Family income had a significant role in our participants' parental practices. Parents with low family income showed stricter and more authoritative parenting practices than those with higher family income. Similar results were presented by [Galani \(2011\)](#) who showed that parents with a lower socioeconomic status provided less support to their children than parents with a higher socioeconomic status. Similar results have been shown in previous studies by [Hoff and Ginsberg \(1998\)](#) and [Lawrence and Shipley \(1996\)](#) who found that mothers with low socioeconomic status differed in their children's parenting practices in comparison to mothers of high socioeconomic status; the latter were more likely to be more actively involved in their children's life and more likely to show affection toward their offspring.

In the present study age was also a significant determinant of parental practices. Our results indicated that older parents displayed more affection toward their children whereas younger parents appeared to be more hostile and rejecting. The research findings are confirmed by similar results reported by [Bezeveggis \(2012\)](#) namely that parents aged 30-40 have more stability in their lives, are more mature and effective and are better prepared to satisfy their children's needs. In the same framework he found that older mothers are more satisfied with their parental role, and are more involved in their children's life. Similarly, [Cox, Paley, Payne, and Burchinal \(1999\)](#) as well as [Florsheim et al. \(2003\)](#) showed that young couples, who become parents, feel more stress in their parental role and have more conflicts in their relationships. After all, young couples with low income(s) face a number of challenges. Young mothers are less able to support their children than older mothers ([Gonzalez, Jones, & Parent, 2014](#)).

Another significant predictor of parental practices is the parental place of residence. Our results showed that parents who lived in urban areas tended to be more supportive of their children than those living in rural areas. In the present study findings showed that parents of children who lived in urban areas perceived their children as having a higher self-esteem and family competence. On the other hand, participating parents who lived in rural areas appeared more hostile and rejecting towards their children. Our findings comply with those of [Galani \(2011\)](#) who found that parents who live in urban areas are more supportive of their children and their children have more family and social competences than the children of parents who live in rural areas.

Last but not least the parental educational level seems to also predict parental child-rearing practices. Participating parents with a secondary education use more authoritarian parenting practices while they are also more permissive. According to their responses their children display lower levels of school competence. Parents with a higher level of education seem to be more supportive of their children. Also, parents with a higher level of education stated that their children have more self-esteem, family, school and social competence. Similar results were obtained in a study by [Querido, Warner, and Eyberg \(2002\)](#) who found that maternal education could affect children's competences. Mothers with a low level of education used more authoritarian methods of education, and tended more often to adopt a permissive type of approach toward their children's education. A study by [Javo, Rønning, Heyerdahl, and Rudmin \(2004\)](#) showed that parents with low socioeconomic and educational backgrounds use tougher ways of discipline towards their children.

*Hypothesis 2. Parental Practices Predict Children's, Family relations, School performance, Social Competences and children's Self-Esteem.*

This study showed that the parental affection / warmth dimension, positively predicts children's family relations, school performance, social competences as well as children's self-esteem. The findings of the research are supported by [Boon \(2007\)](#) which showed that children who reported high parental involvement and acceptance by their parents had very positive academic performance, while children who received low emotional involvement and support from their parents (neglect, rejection) and low parental control had lower academic performance. In contrast, [Pallock and Lamborn \(2006\)](#) study showed that there was no significant correlation between parental acceptance and academic success although they found that children who received parental acceptance had a positive tendency toward school performance.

Various research findings from different populations showed statistically significant positive correlations between dysfunctional family environments and children's school failure and behavioural problems ([Campbell, 1995](#); [Carr, 1999](#); [DeKlyen, Speltz, & Greenberg, 1998](#); [Richman, Bowen, & Woolley, 2004](#); [Ronald & Britner, 2002](#); [Speltz, DeKlyen, Calderon, Greenberg, & Fisher, 1999](#); [Zipper & Simeonsson, 2004](#)).

According to [Goodyer \(1990\)](#) parenting practices greatly influence children's social adjustment. Family differences and parental dysfunctions combined to parental indifference has an adverse effect on children's development and is the cause of behavioural and personality problems. Children's psychosocial maturity is directly related to the parents' attitude towards them. Children's social-school competence is related to the parents - children's relationship ([Cicchetti & Cohen, 1995](#); [Kopp, Baker, & Brown, 1992](#)).

[Baumrind \(1967\)](#); [Baumrind \(1978\)](#) also suggested that children of authoritative parents outperform other children who grow up with permissive and authoritarian parents. Children of authoritative parents have learned to share, respect rules both at home and at school, to wait patiently for their turn, to respect other children and their siblings, and they have acquired higher social and communication skills ([Baumrind, 1967](#); [Baumrind, 1978](#)). Children of authoritative parents make lasting friendships because they are not self-centred and they believe in friendship, as they prove more socially competent ([McLoyd, 1990](#)). A closer examination of the relationship between parental types and social competences of preschool and school children showed that each parental type correlated differently with children's social competence ([Baumrind, 1967](#); [Baumrind, 1978](#)). Children with warm and affectionate parents were more likely to accept parental values which they internalized through their interpersonal relationships. Children of authoritative parents were found to be more social, more independent and responsible as well as more functional ([Baumrind & Black, 1967](#); [Baumrind, 1991](#); [Baumrind, 1991](#)).

[Dornbusch et al. \(1987\)](#) who studied the behavioural patterns of adolescents from different cultures, found that adolescents, whose parents were more authoritative, showed better adaptation and social competence. Also, [Bogenschneider, Small, and Tsay \(1997\)](#); [Mounts and Steinberg \(1995\)](#) emphasize that the democratic way of educating adolescents reduces the negative effects on relationships with their peers. In fact, [Steinberg et al. \(1989\)](#) suggested that the democratic method of educating adolescents is significantly related with adolescents' adjustment, their school performance, and their psychological maturity.

[Georgiou \(1993\)](#); [Milonakou-Keke \(2007\)](#); [Papageorgiou \(2007\)](#) and [Spera \(2006\)](#) underline that there is a positive correlation between parental empowerment and children's learning process. Their research showed that family provides learning stimuli to children, which is of great importance in shaping children's behaviour and personality. Through the family, children become more active participants in school education since they enjoy parental support. Parental behaviour is defined as an important factor that has an impact on children and school learning.

Parental attitudes, expectations, approaches and values regarding their children's personal abilities and school performance are crucial to children's academic progress and success ([Flouris, 2004](#)). A positive and a supportive family environment has a positive impact on children's academic and school success, while strict control and parental stress has negative effect on children. Similar results were found by [Michalis \(2006\)](#) namely that parental stress, strict restrictions, rigid rules, over-supervision of the child had a negative effect on a child's school success. Such parental behaviour was found to be related to children's low school performance.

Indeed, when families were involved in the educational process and supported their children, by implementing parenting practices based on dialogue and the encouragement of initiative children had excellent school performance. On the contrary when parenting practices were based on threats, punishments, non-emotional support to children, children had low school performance and usually had school failure ([Georgiou, 1996](#)). Various findings confirm that authoritative parenting practices are correlated with children's higher school performance, higher autonomy and independence as well as better social adjustment. Children of authoritative parents, have high self-esteem, are more cooperative and supportive, exhibit a positive attitude toward school and they have higher school performance ([Boon, 2007](#); [Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2008](#); [Steinberg et al., 1989](#)). Authoritative parents also contribute positively in developing and enhancing their children's verbal ability through interaction, reasoning and discussions, which also results in higher school competence and success ([Spera, 2005, 2006](#); [Strage & Brandt, 1999](#)). Furthermore, authoritative parenting practices have been associated with children's positive psychosocial development, social skills development, self-esteem and autonomy, and with children's school performance ([Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993](#); [Hein & Lewko, 1994](#); [Lamborn et al., 1991](#); [Newman et al., 2008](#); [Noller & Callan, 1990](#)).

Children of permissive parents are characterized by a low level of social skills, impulsive behaviour, and low self-esteem. Due to the lack of control, guidance, non-participation and involvement of their parents, children have poor school performance and learning difficulties (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Pappa, 2006).

Our results are confirmed by the findings of previous studies. As shown above, parents who implement authoritative parenting practices perceive enhanced social skills, self-esteem, and family and school competence in their children. When parental acceptance is part of the parental socialization practices, then children achieve better school performance and are more cooperative while they display positive psychosocial development, autonomy and confidence. On the contrary, when parents tend more toward authoritarian and permissive methods they report that their children have lower social skills, reduced school competence and do not seem to rely on their own strengths, while they also develop problematic behaviour.

## 5. Suggestions

The present study found that parents, who display acceptance and warmth toward their children, raise children who adapt better to society and school demands by acquiring social skills and competences and by achieving a better school performance. Strict parental practices are an obstacle to children's development and overall psychological adjustment. It is therefore crucial to find ways to support and empower parents in their parental role through seminars and training in order to enable them to become more efficient in handling family life and finding a balance between their family and their other obligations. It is important to develop parenting educational programs through which parents can acquire the necessary skills and abilities to not only satisfy their children's emotional needs but also in order to reduce strict parental practices, parental rejection and hostile behaviour toward their developing children.

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