

The Mediating Role of Emotional Reactivity in the Effect of Parents' Psychological Vulnerability on Children's Emotional-Behavioral Problems

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In early childhood, emotional and behavioral problems may arise due to various factors. While some are typical of developmental stages, others may persist and intensify over time. Parents' psychological resilience or vulnerability plays a critical role in how they manage these issues. Specifically, emotionally reactive parental behaviors may contribute to the development of such problems in children. This study explores the mediating role of emotional reactivity in the relationship between parental psychological vulnerability and children's emotional and behavioral problems. The research included 274 parents (231 mothers, 43 fathers) of children aged 0–8 from various provinces in Türkiye. A descriptive model was used. The Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation Scale measured children's emotional and behavioral difficulties. Parents' emotional reactivity and psychological vulnerability were assessed with validated self-report scales. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and mediation analysis. Results showed significant positive associations among parents' psychological vulnerability, emotional reactivity, and children's emotional and behavioral problems. Mediation analysis indicated that emotional reactivity significantly mediated the effect of psychological vulnerability on child outcomes. As psychological vulnerability increased, so did emotional reactivity, leading to greater emotional and behavioral challenges in children. These findings emphasize the key role of parental emotional health in child development. The study underscores the need for early intervention and psychoeducational support programs for parents to promote children's emotional well-being.

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Introduction

Early childhood encompasses the period from birth to eight years of age (UNICEF, 2019). During this stage, children are highly sensitive to their environment and open to learning; if they successfully complete the adaptation process, they generally experience fewer difficulties in the transition to adulthood. The development of cognitive schemas, interaction with objects, and age-appropriate support during this phase have a positive influence on children's overall development (Bozdemir, 2023). Early childhood development is shaped by both environmental and genetic factors, which collectively influence children's physical, cognitive, and social growth (Bertan et al., 2009; Sanders & Morawska, 2014). In particular, a secure environment and quality caregiving provided by parents support the child's development both in the short and long term, while also mitigating potential adverse effects (Pem, 2015; Tunçeli & Zembat, 2017).

Bronfenbrenner (1979), in his ecological systems theory, emphasized the continuous interaction between individuals and their environments. According to this perspective, the environment in which a child lives and grows plays a decisive role in shaping their capacity to adapt to developmental changes. Bronfenbrenner described child development in layers, identifying the microsystem—comprising the immediate interactions with significant others—as having the most direct and undeniable influence. Within this microsystem, parents emerge as the primary figures with whom the child directly interacts. With parental support, children who experience healthy physical, behavioral, and psychological development in early childhood are more likely to become well-adjusted individuals in later life.

Each new developmental stage in a child's life introduces unique challenges. In striving to adapt to these changes, children may experience emotional and behavioral problems until they have fully adjusted (Yavuzer, 2015). If these issues persist and are not considered a natural part of the child's social and emotional development, they may be classified as problems requiring attention. The high prevalence of such issues in early childhood can be attributed to several factors, including family relationship patterns, developmental characteristics, personality traits, difficulties adapting to new situations, inability to cope with stressful life events, and prolonged exposure to digital devices (Özbey, 2010; İkiz et al., 2016). Emotional and behavioral problems commonly manifest as disorders such as oppositional defiant disorder (Keenan & Wakschlag, 2004) and separation anxiety disorder (Spence et al., 2001). In addition, habitual issues such as thumb-sucking, nail-biting, and enuresis, as well as difficulties in adaptation, may also be observed (Yavuzer, 2015).

Behavioral problems that appear during early childhood are known to increase the risk of maladjustment during adolescence. If left unaddressed—or worse, reinforced by negative responses from the surrounding environment—these behaviors may persist and evolve into more complex problems later in life (Emond et al., 2007). Intervening in children's behavioral problems requires acknowledging not only the child's own responsibility but also the role of the adults and the broader environment interacting with the child (Bradley et al., 2008). Emotional regulation difficulties and adjustment problems experienced during early childhood often result in negative outcomes in later developmental stages. Therefore, identifying children in high-risk groups at an early stage and providing timely interventions is essential (Çorapçı et al., 2010).

Parents should not ignore emotional and behavioral problems exhibited by children in early childhood. Early identification and intervention are critical for children at risk. Moreover, the ways in which parents respond to their children during this period have a significant impact

on the development of emotional and behavioral problems. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that the emotional reactivity levels of parents are associated with the emotional and behavioral issues experienced by their children.

Early childhood is a critical period in which development is shaped by both environmental and individual factors. Emotional and behavioral problems experienced during this stage are likely to have long-term effects on children's lives. It is widely acknowledged that not only the child but also their immediate environment plays a role in the emergence of these problems. Interventions aimed at improving the quality of reactions children receive from their environment at an early age are essential for preventing the development of emotional and behavioral issues. Based on the assumption that parental psychological vulnerability and emotional reactivity are related to the development of positive behaviors in children, this study focuses on the concepts of emotional reactivity and psychological vulnerability.

Emotional Reactivity

As inherently social beings, humans engage in relationships with others throughout their lives and experience a wide range of emotions within these relational contexts. The intensity of these emotions and the nature of the responses elicited by them are considered significant (Seçer et al., 2013). Emotions are individual-specific responses to particular events and are also shaped by involuntary life experiences, which give rise to emotional reactions (Ekman & Cardora, 2011). In daily life, individuals encounter various situations that may cause anxiety and depending on the intensity of the emotions they experience, they exhibit differing emotional responses (Yurdakul & Üner, 2015). Emotional response is influenced by experiential, behavioral, and physiological components (Gross, 2015).

Emotional reactivity is defined as an individual's tendency to experience emotions with high intensity and for prolonged durations in response to various stimuli (Nock et al., 2008). This reactivity can stem from both positive and negative emotional experiences. While negative emotional reactivity is associated with the development of anxiety and depression, experiencing positive emotional reactivity has been found to play a protective role against psychological distress (Boyes et al., 2017). The intensity and dysregulation of emotions, especially when negative, are linked to emotional reactivity that may lead to anxiety and mood disorders. Thus, there is a strong relationship between emotions and psychopathology (Mennin et al., 2007), and in the face of stressful and adverse life events, managing high levels of emotional reactivity and effective emotion regulation become crucial (Shapero et al., 2016). Common emotions that evoke emotional reactivity in individuals include anger, anxiety, stress, and feelings of hurt (Bayrı & Özdemir, 2022).

A review of the relevant literature reveals that emotional reactivity is associated with a wide range of psychological constructs, including difficulties in emotion regulation and cognitive distortions (Teyfur, 2023), parental acceptance-rejection and self-compassion (Dökmeci, 2017), intolerance of uncertainty (Keskin, 2023), depression (Rottenberg, 2005), as well as emotions such as anger, sadness, and psychological distress (Çakmak-Tolan et al., 2022). These findings indicate that emotional reactivity is a multidimensional construct that is significantly associated with various psychological variables.

Psychological Vulnerability

Psychological vulnerability involves cognitive schemas that increase individuals' sensitivity to stress, including negative attributions and tendencies toward self-blame (Sinclair



&Wallston, 2010). Everyday challenges can influence one's level of vulnerability, which is shaped not only by personal factors but also by environmental ones (Rogers, 1997). Psychological vulnerability is considered to be closely related to the emotions, thoughts, and behaviors that arise from interactions with others and the feedback received in these interactions (Ekşi et al., 2019). It has also been noted that hopelessness can contribute to psychological vulnerability (Satıcı & Uysal, 2016), whereas individuals with high levels of social competence tend to report lower levels of psychological vulnerability (Uysal, 2015).

Although there are several studies in Turkey examining emotional and behavioral problems in early childhood in relation to various variables, research specifically addressing the concepts of emotional reactivity and psychological vulnerability in this context remains limited. Therefore, it is considered important to assess parents' levels of psychological vulnerability and emotional reactivity and to provide psychological support aimed at managing these factors effectively.

Based on the findings of this study, it is expected that raising parents' awareness of the impact of their psychological vulnerability and emotional reactivity on their children's emotional and behavioral problems will contribute positively to early childhood mental health. The current research is also expected to inform future studies within the literature addressing children's emotional and behavioral problems.

The aim of this study is to examine the mediating role of emotional reactivity in the relationship between parents' psychological vulnerability and their children's emotional and behavioral problems. Although previous research has explored emotional and behavioral problems in early childhood, limited attention has been given to the combined effect of parental psychological vulnerability and emotional reactivity. By addressing this gap, the present study contributes to the literature by highlighting a key mechanism through which parental emotional functioning may influence child adjustment. In line with this aim, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

- (1) Is there a significant relationship between parents' emotional reactivity, psychological vulnerability, and their children's emotional and behavioral problems?
- (2) Does emotional reactivity mediate the effect of parents' psychological vulnerability on their children's emotional and behavioral problems?

Method

Research Design

In this study, a quantitative research method was employed to examine the mediating role of emotional reactivity in the relationship between parents' psychological vulnerability and their children's emotional and behavioral problems. A descriptive research design was adopted. Quantitative research involves the systematic investigation of social phenomena using statistical or numerical data, aiming to analyze, verify, and ensure the reliability and validity of measurable facts (Watson, 2015). Descriptive research design allows for the collection of data through surveys or scales to understand the views or conditions of a specific group and to describe the current situation (Karasar, 2009). Additionally, a relational survey model was employed to explore the relationship between emotional reactivity and psychological vulnerability. The relational survey model is used to examine the existence,

direction, level, and strength of the relationships between two or more variables (Karasar, 2009).

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of parents with children in early childhood. The sample group included a total of 274 parents—231 mothers and 43 fathers—who had children aged 0–8 and were residing in various provinces across Turkey. A convenience sampling method was used in the study. This method aims to reduce time, effort, and cost by selecting participants who are easily accessible (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008). Parents who were easily accessible and willing to participate were included, primarily through online platforms and preschools. This method was preferred due to time and resource constraints.

Data Collection Process

The data were collected on a voluntary basis. The instruments used in the study were administered both in person and via Google Forms. Data collection was conducted between March and May of 2024.

Data Collection Tools

Socio-Demographic Information Form

This form, developed by the researcher, includes information about the parents, such as gender, age, number of children, city of residence, employment status, educational background, and financial status.

Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation-30 (SCBE-30)

The *Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation-30 Scale* (SCBE-30) was originally developed by LaFreniere and Dumas (1996) and adapted into Turkish by Çorapçı et al. (2010). The SCBE-30 is designed to assess both problem behaviors and social competencies of preschool-aged children. The scale comprises three subscales, each containing 10 items. The *Social Competence* (SC) subscale evaluates positive behaviors such as cooperation and conflict resolution skills observed in peer interactions. The *Anger-Aggression* (AA) subscale assesses externalizing problems, such as oppositional behavior toward adults and aggressive or maladaptive behaviors in peer relationships. The *Anxiety-Withdrawal* (AW) subscale measures internalizing problems, including symptoms of sadness, depressive mood, and social withdrawal in group settings.

Children's emotional and behavioral problems as well as their social skills are rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = always). The SCBE-30 can be completed by teachers (LaFreniere & Dumas, 1996) or parents (Kotler & McMahon, 2002). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for internal consistency were reported as .88, .87, and .84 for the respective subscales. In the present study, the average scores of the *Anger-Aggression* and *Anxiety-Withdrawal* subscales were used to construct the variable representing *Emotional and Behavioral Problems*.

Emotional Reactivity Scale

The *Emotional Reactivity Scale* was developed by Nock et al. (2008) to assess individuals' levels of emotional reactivity. The scale consists of 17 items rated on a 4-point



Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree). The scale has a three-factor structure, including the subdimensions of *Sensitivity*, *Arousal/Responsiveness*, and *Persistence/Recovery*. The Turkish adaptation was conducted by Seer et al. (2013). The internal consistency coefficient of the original version was reported as .94, and the same value (.94) was obtained in the Turkish adaptation. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was calculated as .85, while the coefficients for the subscales were .81 for Sensitivity, .70 for Reactivity, and .59 for Persistence.

Psychological Vulnerability Scale

The original version of the *Psychological Vulnerability Scale* was developed by Sinclair and Wallston (1999), and its Turkish adaptation, including validity and reliability analyses, was conducted by Akin and Eker (2011). This scale aims to assess adults' levels of psychological vulnerability. It consists of 6 items and is structured as a 5-point Likert-type scale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of psychological vulnerability. The scale includes items such as "I need approval from others in order to feel good about myself," which reflect indicators of psychological vulnerability. To confirm the unidimensional structure of the scale, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on data collected from 371 university students. The results showed that the unidimensional model provided good fit to the data, consistent with the original version ($\chi^2 = 7.82$, $df = 9.00$, $RMSEA = .00$, $NFI = .97$, $CFI = 1.00$, $GFI = .99$, $AGFI = .98$, $RFI = .95$, $SRMR = .02$). The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .75, and item-total correlation coefficients ranged from .26 to .44.

Data Analysis

To examine the relationships among the study variables, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. To test the mediating role of emotional reactivity in the relationship between psychological vulnerability and children's emotional and behavioral problems, a mediation analysis was performed. The significance of the direct and indirect effects in the proposed model was assessed using the bootstrapping technique. To test the mediation effect, 5,000 bootstrap resamples were generated within a 95% confidence interval. A parametric bootstrapping method was employed to evaluate the mediating role of emotional reactivity in the relationship between psychological vulnerability and children's emotional-behavioral problems. This approach is consistent with recommendations by Hayes (2018), who emphasizes the robustness of bootstrapping for testing indirect effects. All analyses were carried out using the Jamovi software.

Table 1. Frequency Table for Demographic Characteristics of the Sample Group

Demographic Variables	Categories	f
Gender	Female	231
	Male	43
Age	Under 35	182
	35–45	80
	45–55	12
Number of Children	1	76
	2	120
	3	60
	4 or more	18
Employment Status	Employed	144
	Unemployed	130

Socioeconomic Status	Low	20
	Middle	243
	High	11
Educational Level	Primary School	27
	Middle School	38
	High School	61
	Associate Degree	81
	Bachelor's Degree	45
	Postgraduate	22

An examination of Table 1 reveals that the majority of participants were female ($n = 231$, 84%), while male participants ($n = 43$, 16%) were less represented. Regarding age distribution, participants under the age of 35 ($n = 182$, 66%) constituted the largest group, followed by those aged 35–45 ($n = 80$, 29%) and 45–55 ($n = 12$, 5%). In terms of the number of children, most participants had two children ($n = 120$, 44%) or one child ($n = 76$, 28%). Employment status data show that 53% ($n = 144$) of participants were employed, whereas 47% ($n = 130$) were unemployed. With respect to socio-economic status, the vast majority of participants identified as belonging to a middle-income group ($n = 243$, 89%), while those from low ($n = 20$, 8%) and high ($n = 11$, 4%) socio-economic backgrounds were underrepresented. In terms of educational attainment, the highest number of participants held an associate degree ($n = 81$, 29%) or had completed high school ($n = 61$, 22%). Lower rates were observed among those with only a primary school education ($n = 27$, 10%), middle school education ($n = 38$, 14%), a bachelor's degree ($n = 45$, 16%), or postgraduate education ($n = 22$, 8%).

Findings

Table 2. Correlation Results Between Parents' Psychological Vulnerability, Emotional Reactivity, and Children's Emotional-Behavioral Problems

Variable	N	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Emotional-Behavioral Problems	274	18.31	3.32	-		
2. Psychological Vulnerability	274	14.84	4.68	.228*	-	
3. Emotional Reactivity	274	38.46	9.29	.319*	.624*	-

* $p < .001$

According to the results presented in Table 2, parents' psychological vulnerability and emotional reactivity are significantly associated with their children's emotional and behavioral problems. In particular, there is a positive and significant correlation between parents' emotional reactivity and their children's emotional-behavioral difficulties ($r = .319$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that when parents exhibit more intense emotional responses, their children are more likely to experience emotional and behavioral problems. Similarly, a significant relationship was found between parents' psychological vulnerability and their children's emotional-behavioral problems ($r = .228$, $p < .001$). Moreover, the correlation between psychological vulnerability and emotional reactivity was notably high ($r = .624$, $p < .001$).

.001). These findings suggest that parents' psychological well-being may play a critical role in the emotional and behavioral health of their children.

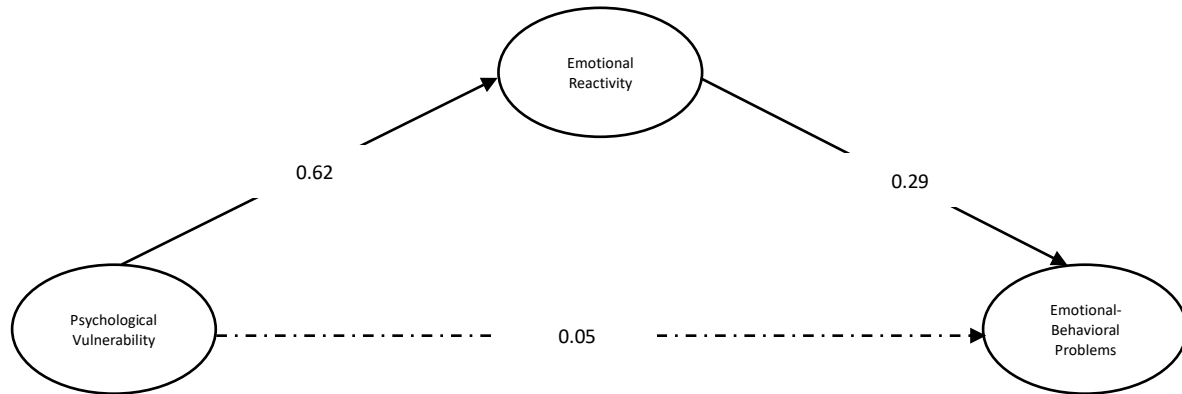


Figure 1. The Mediating Role of Emotional Reactivity in the Relationship Between Psychological Vulnerability and Children's Emotional-Behavioral Problems

The results of the mediation analysis indicate that emotional reactivity plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between parents' psychological vulnerability and their children's emotional-behavioral problems. Examination of the indirect effect reveals that the impact of psychological vulnerability on emotional-behavioral problems through emotional reactivity is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.1805$, $p < .001$). When the components of this effect are examined, the influence of psychological vulnerability on emotional reactivity is both significant and strong ($\beta = 0.6239$, $p < .001$), and the effect of emotional reactivity on emotional-behavioral problems is also significant ($\beta = 0.2892$, $p < .001$). In terms of the direct effect, the relationship between psychological vulnerability and emotional-behavioral problems was not found to be statistically significant ($\beta = 0.0476$, $p = .545$). However, the total effect was significant ($\beta = 0.2280$, $p = .002$), indicating that emotional reactivity serves as a full mediator in the relationship between psychological vulnerability and children's emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Table 3. Mediating Role of Emotional Reactivity in the Effect of Parents' Psychological Vulnerability on Children's Emotional-Behavioral Problems

Path	Coefficient	SE	%95 C.I.				
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	β	Z	p
Direct Effects							
Psychological Vulnerability ⇒	1.2380	0.0965	1.049	1.427	0.6239	12.834	< .001
Emotional Reactivity							
Emotional Reactivity ⇒	0.1035	0.0291	0.0472	0.161	0.2892	3.560	< .001
Emotional-Behavioral Problems							
Psychological Vulnerability ⇒	0.0338	0.0558	-0.076	0.143	0.0476	0.605	0.545
Emotional-Behavioral Problems							
Indirect Effect							

Psychological Vulnerability ⇒	0.1281	0.0365	0.0573	0.200	0.1805	3.508	< .001
Emotional Reactivity ⇒							
Emotional-Behavioral Problems							
Total Effect							
Psychological Vulnerability ⇒	0.1619	0.0489	0.065	0.257	0.2280	3.309	0.002
Emotional Reactivity ⇒							
Emotional-Behavioral Problems							

These findings suggest that parents' psychological vulnerability does not directly affect the level of emotional and behavioral problems in their children; rather, this effect occurs predominantly through emotional reactivity. In other words, as psychological vulnerability increases, parents tend to exhibit higher levels of emotional reactivity, which in turn leads to greater levels of anxiety and anger in their children. These results highlight the critical role of emotional reactivity in children's emotional and behavioral development and underscore the significant impact that intrafamilial psychological processes may have on children's emotional adjustment.

Discussion, Conclusion, And Recommendation

Throughout life, individuals react differently to situations, and these reactions often evoke distinct emotional experiences. The intensity and valence (positive or negative) of these reactions vary from person to person, which constitutes the basis of the concept of emotional reactivity (Tunç & Özpölat, 2024). During early childhood, parents play a critical role in the emergence of children's emotional and behavioral problems. The parent-child relationship, parenting style, approach to the child, and the psychological well-being of the parent are all influential factors in the development of these problems.

This study aimed to examine the mediating role of emotional reactivity in the relationship between parents' psychological vulnerability and their children's emotional and behavioral problems. The focus was to understand how children's emotional and behavioral problems are shaped by their parents' psychological states. The findings revealed significant relationships between parents' psychological vulnerability and emotional reactivity, and their children's emotional-behavioral problems.

A significant and positive relationship was found between parents' emotional reactivity and children's emotional-behavioral problems. This suggests that when parents exhibit higher emotional reactivity, their children tend to display more emotional and behavioral issues. Since a child's first social contact begins with their parents, the emotional tone and communication style of the parent serve as foundational influences on the child's behavior. A positive parent-child relationship is crucial for a child's lifelong happiness, stability, and success (Akarslan, 2022). Prior research supports these assumptions. For instance, Akarslan (2022) found a relationship between parents' emotional reactivity and their communication with children. Parental consistency and determination are vital in helping children manage emotional and behavioral difficulties. When parents are aware of their emotional responses and serve as models for their children, the latter are more likely to develop problem-solving skills and sensitivity to their environment.

According to Çakır (2024), parents' emotion regulation and control skills significantly affect children's emotional and behavioral outcomes. In this regard, the parent-child relationship influences children's social problem-solving abilities. Higher parental emotional reactivity increases the likelihood of behavioral problems in children and leaves them vulnerable to external stimuli (Buodo et al., 2013). Individuals with high emotional reactivity and poor emotion regulation are more likely to experience anxiety and depression (Shapero et al., 2016). When parents are competent in regulating their emotional responses, their children exhibit fewer emotional and behavioral problems (Kabaalioglu, 2019). Therefore, identifying children with behavioral problems and addressing them through appropriate emotional responses is of paramount importance (Çorapçı et al., 2010).

Parents play a guiding role in helping their children cope with life's difficulties. This role influences children's perceptions of situations and their emotional responses throughout life (Akarslan, 2022). Uncontrolled and intense emotional reactions may lead to psychological disorders and negatively affect individuals' lives. At this point, emotional awareness and control seemed to have become essential (Ozen, 2021). Parents' emotional responses can be said to be important for preventing and managing behavioral problems in children. To regulate their emotional responses effectively, individuals need to reach a level of emotional maturity, which involves recognizing, understanding, adapting to, and managing emotions appropriately (Töremen & Çankaya, 2008).

A significant positive correlation was found between psychological vulnerability and children's emotional-behavioral problems. As parents' psychological vulnerability increases, their children's emotional and behavioral difficulties also tend to rise. According to Ülker and Avsaroglu (2021), higher levels of parental psychological vulnerability are associated with increased behavioral and adjustment problems in children. Psychologically vulnerable parents often struggle to cope with challenges, especially in stressful, uncertain, or high-pressure situations (Altıntaş, 2023). The need for approval and dependency on others' evaluations also contribute to psychological vulnerability (Saka, 2023). Conversely, it can be said that low levels of psychological vulnerability among parents may positively affect children's development and increase their social adjustment.

Another key finding of the study was that emotional reactivity significantly mediates the relationship between parents' psychological vulnerability and their children's emotional-behavioral problems. Psychological vulnerability was not found to have a direct effect, but rather exerted its influence through heightened emotional reactivity. As psychological vulnerability increases, emotional reactivity also intensifies, leading to more pronounced emotional and behavioral difficulties in children. Thus, parental emotional reactivity plays a critical role in children's emotional and behavioral development.

One possible explanation for these findings is that psychologically vulnerable parents may struggle with emotional regulation and experience higher levels of stress or anxiety, which can increase their emotional reactivity. In turn, children who are consistently exposed to emotionally reactive parenting may develop emotional insecurity, behavioral resistance, or internalizing problems as a response to unpredictable or intense emotional climates at home. This pathway may help explain the full mediation effect observed in the study.

Reviewing the relevant literature, Kindıroğlu (2018) found that higher levels of parental psychological well-being are associated with increased child social competence and decreased levels of anxiety and anger. Similarly, Bayrı and Özdemir (2022) concluded that higher

vulnerability is linked with greater emotional reactivity, and consequently, more intense experiences of anxiety, stress, lack of motivation, and unhappiness. Çakmak (2018) identified a partial mediating role of psychological resilience in the relationship between avoidant/anxious attachment styles and emotional reactivity.

Preventive interventions in early childhood are of critical importance in addressing emotional and behavioral problems. If these issues are not addressed in a timely manner, they may lead to the development of aggressive, withdrawn, or angry behaviors in later years. Therefore, it is recommended that intervention programs be designed and implemented for both children and parents. Parents should be supported through awareness-raising activities that enhance their ability to recognize and respond to their children's problematic behaviors, with a focus on promoting children's social competence. The interaction among parents, teachers, and children, especially in school-aged populations, should not be overlooked. Training programs for teachers could be developed to promote the cultivation of positive behavior skills during early childhood. Engaging children in age-appropriate and interest-based activities is also suggested. Moreover, psychoeducational programs for parents on emotional awareness and response management, along with professional support for psychological vulnerability, may provide meaningful benefits.

Limitations of the Study

The study sample consisted of parents with children aged 0–8 residing in various provinces of Turkey. Additionally, the sample was predominantly composed of mothers (84%), which may introduce potential biases in the findings. This gender imbalance limits the ability to generalize the results to all parents, particularly fathers. Future research should aim for a more balanced parental representation to ensure greater validity across gender perspectives. One of the primary limitations of this study is the heterogeneity of the sample in terms of sociocultural and demographic characteristics. For instance, a large portion of the participants belonged to a middle socioeconomic background, and the number of father participants was notably limited. Furthermore, the reliance on self-report measures may overlook discrepancies between perceived and actual behaviors. Future studies could expand the sample size and consider different age groups, socioeconomic levels, and cultural contexts to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, as the data were collected using self-report measures from a single source, the study may be subject to common method bias. Although steps were taken to ensure anonymity and reduce social desirability, future research may consider using multi-informant data to assess and minimize this bias.

Declaration

Ethics statements: *Ethical research conduct has been met through voluntary basis of participation and anonymity of the participants.*

Conflict of interest: *The author declares that there are no competing interests upon the publication of this research.*

Data availability: *Data are available upon requests.*



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