

PARENTS TOLERANCE OF CHILD PROBLEM BEHAVIORS AND CHILD GENDER

Esmeralda Ismaili

Psychology-Pedagogy Department, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana
E mail: esmeraldaismaili@gmail.com

Abstract

Studies define parental tolerance as the degree to which a parent tends to be annoyed by his or her child's problematic behavior. Eyberg and Pincus (1999) have proposed that parent tolerance for misbehavior can be concluded from the frequency of a problematic behavior and how much this behavior bothers and concerns the parent. Parental tolerance may be influenced by any of a number of variables, one of them is considered in this study and it is child gender. Literature reveals that boys demonstrate more problematic behaviors than girls. These gender differences may lead to different parent tolerance level toward their girls and boys (Wright, Parent, Forehand, et al., 2012). The purpose of the current study is to examine the relation between parent tolerance of child problematic behaviors and child gender. A sample of 280 parents of 3–6 years old children, who attend kindergarten in Tirana, completed the self-reported questionnaire, Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI) (Eyberg and Pincus, 1999). In the current study, parent tolerance is operationally defined using the two subscales of the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory: Intensity subscale – measuring the frequency and intensity of problem behaviors such as stealing, crying, not completing their duties, etc. and Problem subscale– measuring parents perception of the problem behavior as concerning or not. When the Intensity subscale score is high and the Problem subscale score is low, the parent can be defined as having a high tolerance for the problematic behavior. When the Intensity subscale is low and the problem subscale score is high the parent can be defined as having a low tolerance for the problematic behavior (Eyberg and Pincus, 1999). In this study, internal consistency of ECBI was excellent, for both Intensity Scale ($\alpha = .91$) and Problem Scale ($\alpha = .89$), indicating a deep understanding for the items in this inventory. A significant interaction between child gender and parent tolerance emerged: Parents were equally tolerant of girls and boys when dealing with temper tantrums. Exploratory analyses suggested that parents perceive eating behavior and constantly seeking attention to have a high frequency of happening, while behaviors such as stealing and telling lies have a low frequency. Implications and future directions are discussed across this article.

Keywords: *parental tolerance, child problematic behaviors, child gender, preschooler.*

Introduction:

The tolerance parent show about the misbehavior can be defined as the extent to which a parent tends to be bothered by own child's misbehavior. This tendency to be bothered by child misbehavior varies from neutral levels of tolerance, to levels of extreme tolerance or intolerance for child misbehavior. Parental tolerance for misbehavior can be concluded from

an interaction between the frequency of a child's behavior problems and how much the behavior actually irritates the parent (Eyberg & Pincus, 1999).

It is developmentally typical for the young children to display a large number of negative behaviors such as noncompliance and temper tantrums in response to not having things their way, since they are in search for independence and autonomy especially in their home setting (Campbell, 1995; Erikson, 1963).

Many researches have pointed that the duration of displaying negative behaviors and how the parent interprets and responds to them is greatly influenced by the parent's tolerance for these bothering behaviors.

Parental tolerance is a new construct that has not been studied in-depth, but is believed to be an important variable that influences child misbehavior and how parents react to the misbehavior. Parental tolerance can vary from neutral levels of tolerance to high or low tolerance for child misbehavior. A parent's tolerance of own young child's problem behavior may be partially determined by gender of both parent and child. Literature reveals that boys demonstrate more problematic behaviors than girls. These gender differences may lead to different parent tolerance level toward their girls and boys (Wright, et al., 2012).

Parents who become highly annoyed by child behavior may believe that their child exhibits more negative behaviors than the child actually exhibits (Brestan, et al., 2003). If the parent focus only to the child's negative behavior, this will serve to reinforce the negative behavior and decrease the likelihood that the child will behave in an appropriate manner. Further, intolerant parents may not recognize the implications of their parenting style and mistakenly attribute the child's misbehavior exclusively to the child (Kendziora and O'Leary, 1993).

Aim of study/research:

The purpose of the current study is to examine the relation between parents and child problem behaviors and also the differences of parental tolerance based on child gender.

Research topics:

The main topics of the current study refers to developmental psychology. The concept of parental tolerance has recently been considered as a variable influencing child misbehavior. While, literature reveals that child misbehavior is very common among young children.

Research questions:

The study aims to explain some research questions:

- Do parents perceive their children as exhibiting misbehaviors?
- Do parents of misbehaving children tolerate/not concerned their children behavior?
- Are there differences in parents' tolerance toward their child's gender?

Scientific methods:

A descriptive quantitative research design is implemented to give answer to the research questions. The data were gathered through self-reported questionnaires. Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI) was designed to assess the parental report of behavior problem in

children (Eyberg & Ross, 1978). The instrument was translated in Albanian language and back translated in English, providing accuracy in items translation.

ECBI contains two scales: Intensity scale – measuring the frequency and intensity of problem behaviors such as stealing, crying, not completing their duties, etc. and Problem scale– measuring parents perception of the problem behavior as concerning or not. The Intensity scale asks parents to rate each item on a Likert-type scale of 1 (“Never”) to 5 (“Always”) on “How often does this occur with your child?” The Problem Scale asks parents to respond “Yes” or “No” to the question: “Is this a problem for you?” for each behavior.

In the current study, internal consistency for Intensity Scale ($\alpha = 0.91$) and Problem Scale ($\alpha = 0.89$) indicated a deep understanding for the items in this inventory.

The 36-items ECBI were distributed to 290 parents living in Tirana. Self-reported questionnaires were distributed to parents of preschoolers contacted from kindergarten teachers, in five kindergartens in Tirana, when they came to pick up their children from kindergarten.

Self-reported questionnaires were completed by: 76% mother of child; 21% father of child; 3% both parents together and they were parent to 48% girls and 52% boys. The mean age of their children was 56.7 months (22-78 months).

Data analysis:

The goal of the study was to examine parental tolerance for child problem behavior and the child’s gender differences. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were processed to conclude the study results.

Questionnaires’ data were processed through SPSS-21. The original version, also used in this study, has no reversed items. After the data cleaning procedure, only 280 questionnaires were considered to be analyzed in the current study. The questionnaires that had 10% of the items unanswered were excluded ($N = 7$). Also the data that have extreme values were deleted ($N = 3$).

The reliability analyses were conducted for the Intensity scale and Problem Scale, in order to show if they were accurate to be used for the Albanian context. Correlation analyses were conducted to find if there were any relation between parents’ reports for the frequency of the problem behaviors and their concerns about them.

Findings:

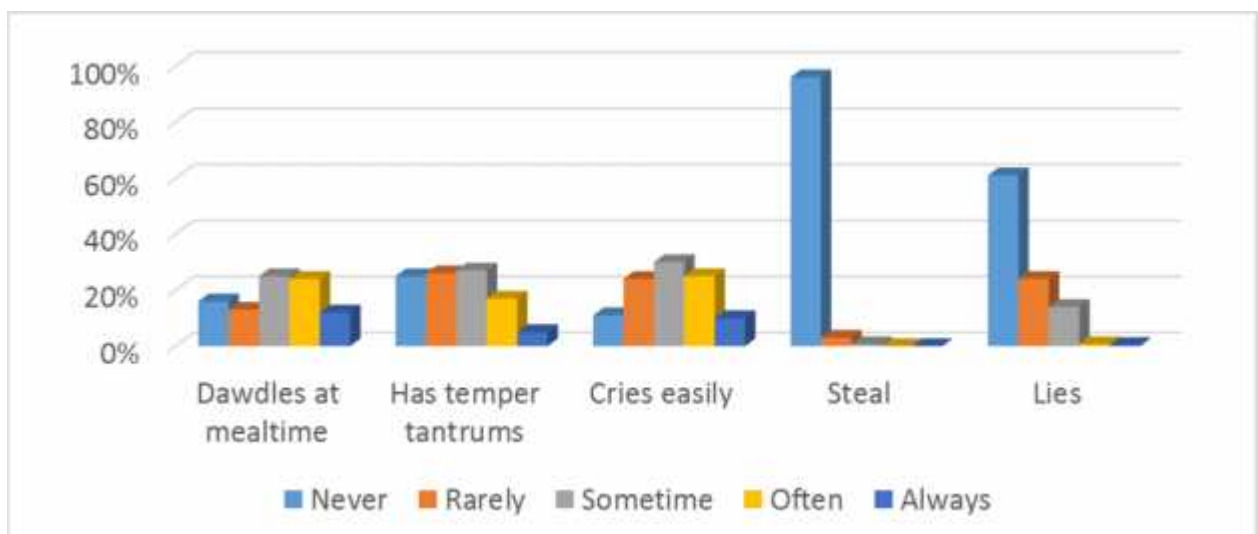
The findings of the current study are presented graphically and they are further discussed, considering the research questions.

The inferential analysis shows that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the intensity of behavior occurrence and parent’s perception of the behavior as problematic $r(278) = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$. This means that the intensity of behavior occurrence indicates parent problem perception in 21.2%.



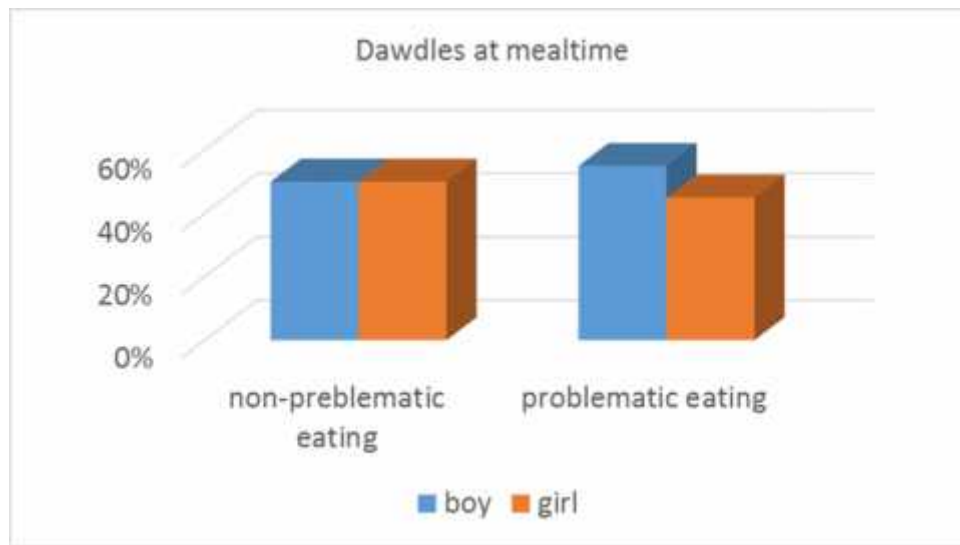
Graph 1: Correlation between behavior intensity and problem

The graph below indicates the frequency of some behaviors that parents reported to happen with their children. The study results reveal that stealing and lying have a low frequency of happening and therefore these behaviors aren't a matter of concern for them. Also behaviors such as temper tantrums and crying seem to happen frequently to children of parents' sample. As it is shown in the graph 2, parents perception for this behavior seems to be more problematic for boys (53%) rather than for girls.



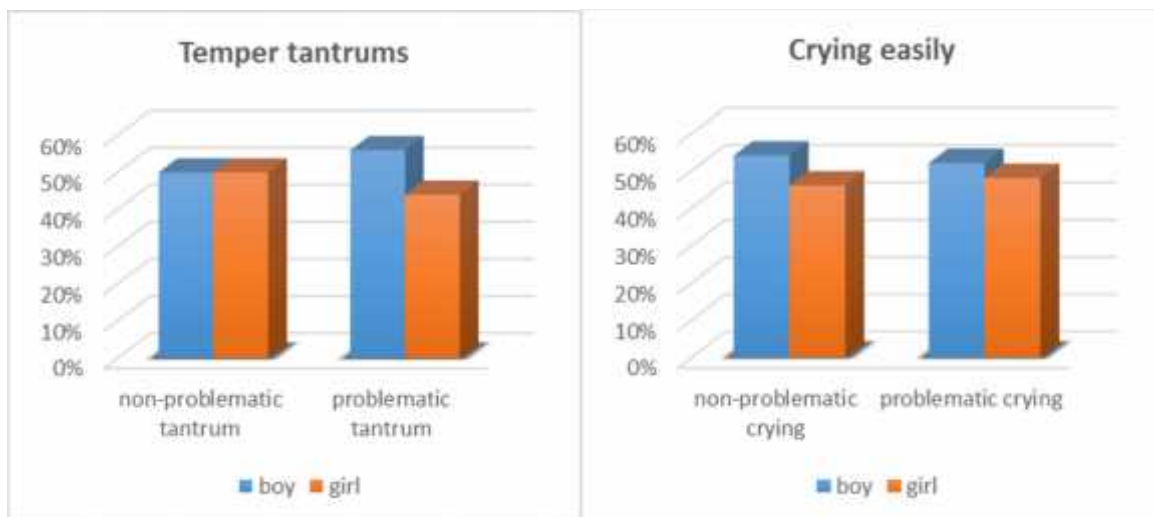
Graph 2: Behavior intensity

While the child behavior that deals with loosing time during the mealtime seem to happen with a moderate frequency (graph 3).



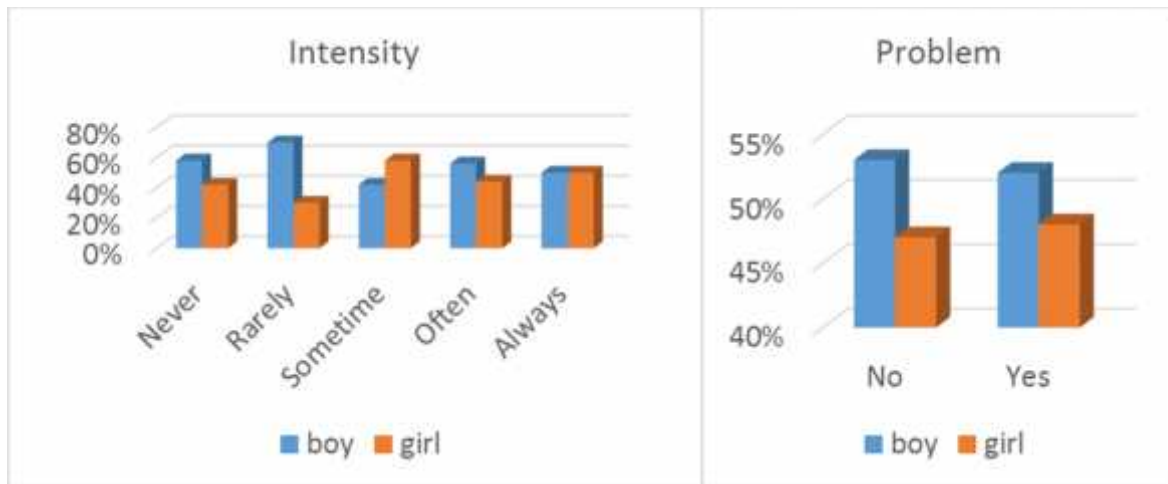
Graph 3: Dawdles at mealtime behavior based on gender

Temper tantrums and crying are the most common behaviors exhibited by preschooler and studies explained that this behavior is exhibited equally by boys and girls. Also, the literature suggests that parents are annoyed by this behavior and usually have low tolerance. In the current study, the results show that there are gender differences regarding how frequent is the temper tantrums behavior. Parents seem to be annoyed by this behavior when it comes to their sons. The behavior of crying easily generally seems not to be a concern for the parents when it comes to their sons, but for the parents that crying behavior is problem, they reported that are more concerned when this behavior is performed by the boys.



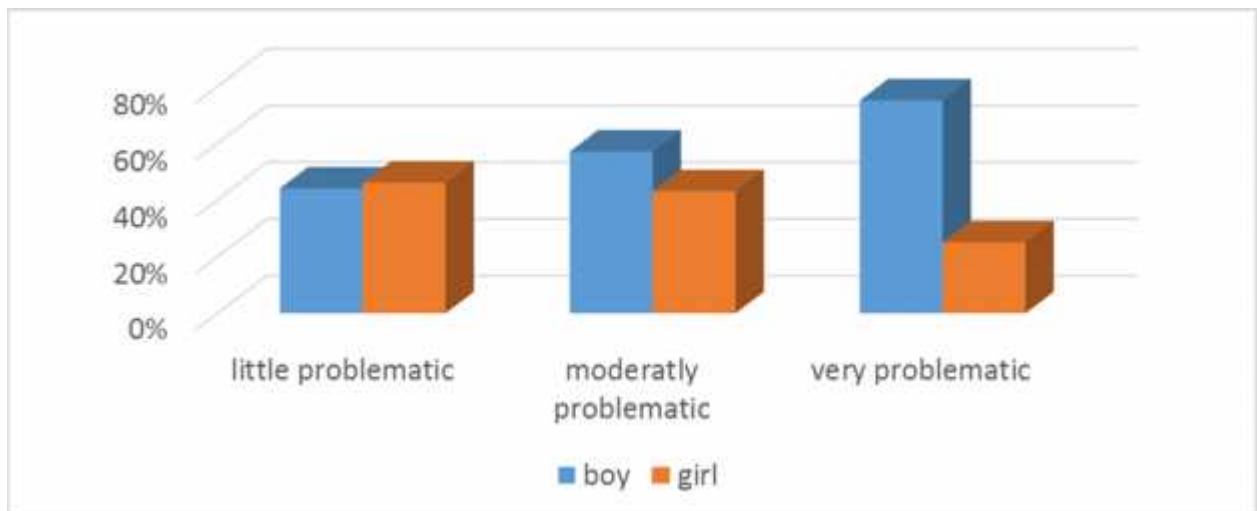
Graph 4: Temper tantrums and crying easily behavior based on gender

This is common in Albanian culture where boys are taught to be brave by telling them that is a shame for a boy to cry. Apparently they exchange the need to cry with tantrum explosions. While girls are allowed to cry, as the culture says that females are fragile.



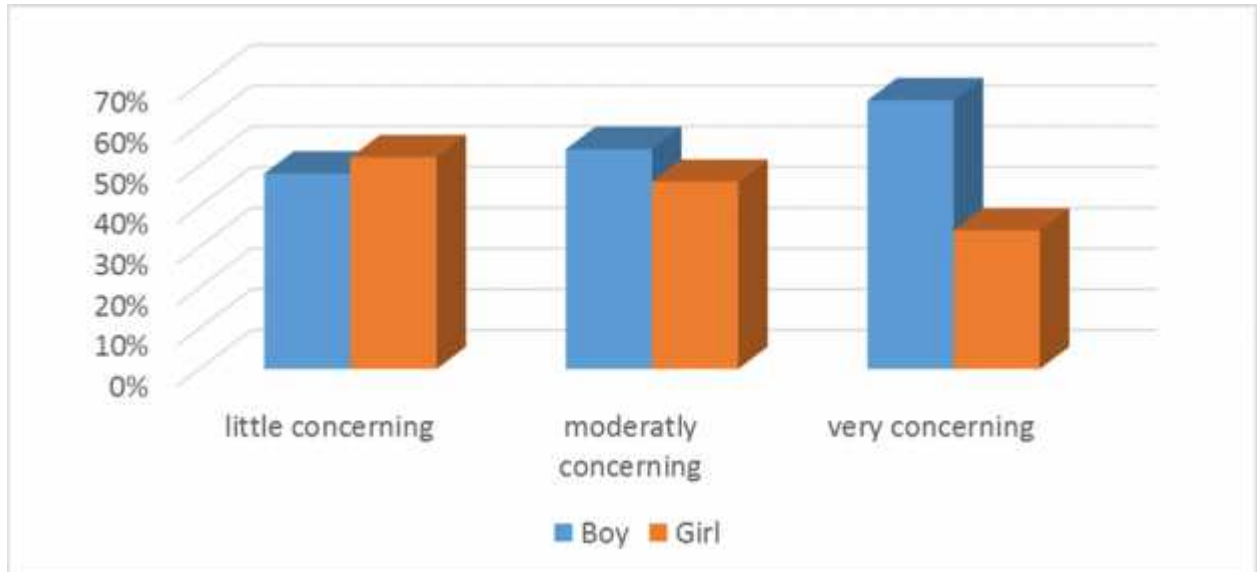
Graph 1: Seeking attention and parents' concern about this behavior

As literature suggests the preschool age is characterized by misbehaviors. In the current study, as it shown in the graph below general perception of parents for their children behavior is that they exhibit moderately problematic behaviors and there are gender differences regarding problematic behavior. Parents perceive their sons behavior to be much more problematic compare to their daughters.



Graph 2: Behavior Intensity based on gender

And also parents seem to be very concerned about their sons' problem behavior. This finding is supported in other studies reveal that boys demonstrate more problematic behaviors than girls, as perceived by their parents.



Graph 7: Problem behavior based on gender

Conclusions:

- There is a consistency between the intensity of the behavior and the problem behavior reported by parents. Parents that reported that their children have a high frequency of the misbehavior are less tolerant.
- Behaviors such as stealing and telling lies are reported to have a low frequency.
- Eating behavior and constantly seeking attention are reported to have a high frequency of happening.
- Parents reported that boys are engaged frequently in problematic behaviors compare to girls
- Therefore, parents are more concerned about boys' behavior, showing low tolerance toward their behaviors
- Parents were equally tolerant of girls and boys when dealing with temper tantrums.

Recommendations:

For the author knowledge, the assessment of preschool children problem behavior is not a much studied field in Albania.

There is a need for child behavior measurement and rating instruments standardized for the Albania Context. The instrument used in the current study, is a well-established measure of problem behavior in children and adolescents, used in different cultures. It is of great interest to standardize this Inventory in the Albanian culture.

Research should be conducted also to see if there are any differences relating to parents' gender and child's gender in reporting problem behaviors and concerns.

References:

- Anna W. Wright, Justin Parent, Rex Forehand et al. (2013) The Relation of Parent and Child Gender to Parental Tolerance of Child Disruptive Behaviors, 779-785. In *Journal of Child and Family Studies*.
- Brestan, V. E, Eyberg, M. S., Algina, J., Johnson, B. S., & Boggs, S. B. (2003). *How Annoying Is It? Defining Parental Tolerance for Child Misbehavior*. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy* 25(2).
- Campbell, S. B. (1995). *Behavior problems in preschool children: A review of recent research*. *Journal of Child Psychology, Psychiatry, and Allied Disciplines*, 36, 113-149.
- Eyberg, S. M., & Pincus, D. (1999). *Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory and Sutter-Eyberg Student Behavior Inventory-revised professional manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Kendziora, K. T., & O'Leary, S. G. (1993). *Dysfunctional parenting as a focus for prevention and treatment of child behavior problems*. In the Brestan, V. E, Eyberg, M. S., Algina, J., Johnson, B. S., & Boggs, S. B. (2003). *How Annoying Is It? Defining Parental Tolerance for Child Misbehavior*. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy* 25(2).