THE PARENTS OF SUCCESSFUL SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF TURKISH AND MOROCCAN BACKGROUND IN THE NETHERLANDS: PARENTING PRACTICES AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS

INeKE van der VEEN AND G. WIM MEIJNEN
University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

The present study focuses on academically successful 17 year old adolescents of Turkish and Moroccan background in the Netherlands. The parenting practices of their parents are examined along with the students' relationships with their parents. One hundred and six successful and less successful adolescents of Turkish, Moroccan and Dutch background participated in the study. The successful ethnic-minority students were expected to have a better relationship with their parents and to have less authoritarian parents than did less successful students. Indeed, the successful Turkish- and Moroccan-background students appeared to have less authoritarian parents than did the less successful. Nevertheless, the successful Turkish- and Moroccan-background students had a less satisfactory relationship with their parents, probably because their success widened the social distance between them and their parents more than was the case for the other groups.

Since the 1960s, many different minority groups have settled in the Netherlands. Three main groups can be distinguished: immigrants from the former colonies; guest workers; asylum seekers and refugees. The largest groups of immigrants are guest workers and people from the former colonies. In the Netherlands, about 13 percent of all school-going children are from ethnic minorities. In this paper we focus on the largest groups of guest workers: Turks and Moroccans. They were encouraged to come to the Netherlands when rapid economic growth brought about a shortage of unskilled labour. Although most

Ineke van der Veen and G. Wim Meijnen, SCO-Kohstamm Institute, Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Appreciation is due to reviewers including Dr. Daniel T. L. Shek, Professor of Social Work, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Key words: parent child relations, childrearing practices, minority groups, academic achievement, adolescents.

Please address correspondence and reprint requests to Ineke van der Veen, SCO-Kohstamm Institute, Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, University of Amsterdam, P.O. Box 94208, 1090 GE Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Phone: 31(0) 205251301; Fax: 31(0) 205251300; Email: <inekev@educ.uva.nl>
guest workers originally planned to return to their country of origin, many have remained in the Netherlands. Turkish and Moroccan immigrants arriving more recently (often to be reunited with their families) have nearly all stayed. In 1999, 300,000 Turks and 253,000 Moroccans were living in the Netherlands in a total population of about 16,000,000. Many are long-term unemployed and new arrivals experience great difficulties finding a job.

The literature devoted to the school careers of students of Turkish and Moroccan background in the Netherlands reports that these students do not perform as well as students of Dutch background. Researchers have often examined the factors that underlie the less successful school careers of these students. However, there are also secondary school students of Turkish and Moroccan background who are successful at school: they attend a higher level school type, which enables them to proceed automatically to tertiary education on completing high school.

The percentage of successful students of Turkish and Moroccan background (15 percent) can be said to be relatively high, considering the academic achievement of these groups in primary school (Van der Veen, 2001). It is of interest to investigate why some Turkish- and Moroccan-background students are placed in a school of a higher level, while others who had similar achievement scores in primary school are placed in a school of a lower level (in this study this term refers to schools that prepare for manual occupations or intermediate vocational education).

A study of successful students of Turkish and Moroccan background is important because this may facilitate the emancipation of people of Turkish and Moroccan background in the Netherlands by fostering an attitude that the success of these people is not unusual. Successful students may also serve as a model for other Turkish- and Moroccan-background students. This paper focuses on successful secondary school students of Turkish and Moroccan background in the Netherlands and investigates the reasons for their success. The main focus is on the students’ relationship with their parents and their upbringing.

THEORY

The influence of parents is important not only in childhood, but also in adolescence (Brown, Mounts, Lamborn, & Steinberg, 1993). In this section the relationship between children and parents and parenting behavior are discussed. The quality of the relationship with parents is important from an early age. Bowlby (1982) described the negative consequences for individuals who fail to develop or deviate in attachment behavior; they are more susceptible to psychiatric disturbance. Parenting behavior can be characterized by two general dimensions: parental support and parental control (Ten Haaf, 1993). The concepts of warmth,
affection, responsiveness and concern can define parental support. Within control, the second child-rearing dimension, two subdimensions can be distinguished: authoritative and authoritarian (Gerrits et al., 1996). Authoritative control can be characterized by giving explanations, encouragement of independent behavior (autonomy), suggestions, and stimulation. Authoritarian control can be defined by the concepts: restrictiveness, conformism, the exercise of power, punishment and ignoring.

As indicated, the relationship between children and their parents is important. Adolescents who feel low levels of attachments to their parents report poorer psychological well-being than adolescents who are strongly attached to their parents (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Nada Raja, McGee, & Stanton, 1992). In the Netherlands, Moroccan-background girls report a better relationship with their mothers than with their fathers (Pels, 1998), as do Turkish girls. (Nijsten, 1998).

Strong parental support has been found to have a positive effect on the development of children. For example, Noom, Dekovic, and Meeus (1996) found in a study about child-rearing in the Netherlands that when fathers are available for support, their children (between 15 and 18 years old) become depressed less often. In the Netherlands, both in Moroccan- and Turkish-background families, children seem to be supported more by their mothers than by their fathers (Pels, 1998; Nijsten, 1998).

Concerning parental control, the child-rearing practices of migrant parents with a Turkish or Moroccan background have often been labeled authoritarian. Dutch-background parents are very authoritative and hardly authoritarian at all (Gerrits et al., 1996).

Children with authoritarian parents achieve less well in school than children with authoritative parents (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987). However, it remains to be seen whether the authoritarian child-rearing practices of migrant parents also affect the school careers of their children unfavourably. The norms and values of the peer group at school might compensate for this negative effect (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). Furthermore, parenting styles of those who belong to ethnic minorities that seem overly restrictive, might have a positive rather than a negative effect on the school careers of their children: For example, parents may be providing optimum supervision and support in dangerous, impoverished neighbourhoods (Baumrind, 1996).

In authoritarian families fathers customarily have a stronger position than do mothers. When mothers have a stronger position in the family this may be a factor in the success of academically successful ethnic minorities, as mothers are better able to support and encourage their children in their aspirations (Gándara, 1995).
Monitoring by parents is a part of parental control. Monitoring can have an important influence on children; Brown et al. (1993) found parental monitoring to be related positively to the self-reliance of adolescents and negatively to drug use. In Moroccan-background families in the Netherlands Pels (1998) found a relationship between monitoring and autonomy: mothers who are more autonomous in their child-rearing practices monitor their children more from a distance, while mothers who are less focused on autonomy keep their children on a short rein.

Little is known about the parenting practices of the parents of successful students from ethnic minorities. These are investigated in the present study.

**Research Questions**

What is the difference between successful students from a Turkish or Moroccan background and successful students from a Dutch background in their upbringing and in the quality of the relationship with their parents?

To what extent can the success of successful students of Turkish, Moroccan and Dutch background be explained by their upbringing and by the quality of the relationship with their parents? What are the differences in this respect between students from a Dutch and from a Turkish or Moroccan background?

**Method**

**Research Design**

As explained in the introduction, we were interested in investigating why some students of Turkish and Moroccan background attend a school of a higher level, while others with similar achievement scores in primary school attend a school of a lower level. It was, therefore, necessary to have data about the school careers of students in both primary and secondary school. The cohort we used and the selection procedure of the students is discussed in more detail later in this section, but firstly a brief overview of the procedure is given. Groups of students with different school careers were selected from the cohort. After the students were selected, they were traced and asked to participate in the present study. Each student was then asked to complete a questionnaire, as were their parents.

We used existing data which were gathered for the purpose of evaluating a policy of the Dutch government directed towards favouring pupils with parents of a lower socio-economic status (De Wit, Suhre, & Mulder, 1996). The data, from a cohort known as 1992-8, contain information on both the primary and secondary school career of more than 5,700 children. Intelligence; length of stay in the Netherlands; age; gender; socio-economic background and country of origin are recorded. The children were tested in the fourth (1988), sixth (1990) and eighth grade (1992) of primary school. In the present study the ethnic background of the
children has been determined by the father’s country of origin. Of the 1,526 minority students in the cohort with a lower socio-economic status, 419 have a Turkish father and 449 a Moroccan father.

In the current study “successful” and “less successful” Turkish - and Moroccan-background students are compared and, in addition, “successful” Dutch and “successful” Turkish - and Moroccan-background students are also compared. For the purposes of this study, successful students are defined as students who attend a type of school which enables them to proceed to tertiary education on completing high school. Less successful students are defined as students who do not attend a school of a higher level but who instead attend schools that prepare for manual labour or intermediate vocational education.

Both the successful and less successful Turkish - and Moroccan-background students had comparable composed achievement scores for language and arithmetic in the last year of primary school. To be able to make a better comparison between the Dutch - and non-Dutch - background groups, data have been included only from Dutch-background students with parents with a lower socio-economic status.

In the 1992-8 cohort the “successful” group contained 68 students of Turkish background and 64 students of Moroccan background; the “less successful” group contained 49 Turkish-background and 50 Moroccan-background students. A random sample of Dutch-background students with a level of academic achievement similar to that of the Turkish - and Moroccan-background “successful” and “less successful” students was selected. This group contained 70 “successful” and 50 “less successful” Dutch-background students. Students from all over the Netherlands were approached. For reasons of privacy, the students could only be approached through the school. Both the school and the students had to give their consent to participate in the study. At the time the students were approached, they were in the fifth year of secondary school or they were continuing their education in intermediate vocational education.

Subject Response

One hundred and six students – 30% of the students who were approached – participated in the study (see Table 1).

The nonresponse in the less successful group was higher. This was probably because students in this group do not want to be reminded of the less successful development of their school career. Although in the present study students with primary school achievement scores in the same range were selected, the successful students who participated appeared to have somewhat higher scores on both language skills and arithmetic in the last grade of primary school than did the less successful students. Nevertheless, the successful and less successful students did not differ in verbal and nonverbal intelligence scores. In Table 1 the
SUCCESSFUL MIGRANT STUDENTS' PARENTS

TABLE 1
THE NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Turkey/ Morocco</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Successful in secondary school</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less successful in secondary school</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

categories of respondents are presented.

Forty-four percent of the students were male and 56 percent were female. Four (8 percent) successful minority students came to the Netherlands when they were a baby, and eight (17 percent) during the primary school period. Six (22 percent) less successful students came to the Netherlands when they were a baby and three (11 percent) during the primary school period. The remaining students were born in the Netherlands.

Both the father and the mother were asked to fill in a questionnaire, because it was expected that the positions of fathers and mothers would differ in some families. If necessary, parents were assisted by their child in filling out the questionnaire. In order to avoid overloading the students, the information was obtained on two separate occasions. On the first occasion, students filled in a questionnaire and on the second, they were interviewed at their school. The interview consisted of precoded and open-ended questions. The students were asked about the child-rearing practices of their parents in the questionnaires. The information obtained from the open-ended questions is not discussed in this paper.

THE INSTRUMENTS

In this section the assessment is described of the variables for upbringing and the relationship of the students with their parents. The relationship with the parents was assessed by the bond and attachment to parents. Upbringing was measured by variables belonging to the two general dimensions of parenting behavior: parental support, and parental control. Parental support was assessed by responsiveness. The first subdimension of parental control – authoritative control – was measured by autonomy; the second subdimension – authoritarian control – was measured by the conformism and strictness of the parents. Parental control was also assessed by monitoring. In Table 2 information on the assessed scales is presented.

Although the scales we used have been found reliable in both the present and previous research, they were not specifically developed for students from ethnic minorities. In the present study we compared the relationship between the scales for the Turkish, Moroccan and Dutch backgrounds and found many similarities. Therefore support was found for the assumption that the scales are suitable for students from ethnic minorities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Definition: a higher score on the scale means</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Answering categories</th>
<th>Cronbach's alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td>a better relationship with the parents according to the students.</td>
<td>Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armaden and Greenberg, 1987)*</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond with parents</td>
<td>that students identify more with their parents</td>
<td>Parental Bond Scale of Van Wel (1994)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>that the student experiences more support from his/her parents</td>
<td>responsivenes-scale of Gerris et al. (1993)**</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>that the students experience more encouragement by their parents to be independent and self-responsible</td>
<td>Autonomy-scale from the 'Nijmeegse Child-Rearing Questionnaire' (Gerris et al., 1993; Gerrits et al., 1996).</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strictness</td>
<td>that students experience their parents as more strict</td>
<td>Parental Strictness scale from Fuligni and Eccles (1993)*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>that the students experience their parents as more conformist in their child-rearing practices</td>
<td>the conformist child-rearing scale from Gerris et al. (1993)**</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>that students experience more parental monitoring</td>
<td>the monitoring-scale of Brown et al. (1993)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As well as the bond with parents, the students were asked about their fathers and mothers separately concerning the measures of the relationship between students and parents and upbringing, because the literature on these subjects reports differences between fathers and mothers. A principal components analysis was performed to check whether separate components for the fathers and mothers had to be formed. For every scale, the items concerning both parents had high enough loadings on one factor. Therefore, for all the measures concerning the relationship with parents and upbringing, one variable was formed for both the father and the mother.

Analysis of the Results
The results are reported in two parts. First the differences between successful Turkish/Moroccan - and Dutch-background students are discussed and second the differences between successful and less successful students. The data have been analysed by means of direct logistic-regression analysis, using SPSS binary logistic regression. This technique was chosen, because it can predict group membership from a set of predictors – in this case, the extent to which the scores on the measured variables can predict whether a student can be classified as successful, or less successful (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Logistic regression has the advantage that no assumptions have to be made about the distributions of the predictor variables; the predictors do not have to be normally distributed, linearly related, or of equal variance within each group. Predictors which in themselves do not discriminate between the two groups may, together with other variables, contribute to the differences between the groups. The logistic-regression analyses regarding the differences between successful and less successful students of Dutch background have not been performed, because there were too few cases relative to the number of predictor variables. The results which differ significantly for these groups are identified by means of the Mann-Whitney U test.

Results
In Table 3 the differences between the successful Turkish/Moroccan - and Dutch-background students are shown. A direct logistic-regression analysis was performed on ethnic group as outcome (successful Turkish/Moroccan - or Dutch-background students) and the predictors: attachment; bond with parents; responsiveness; autonomy; strictness; conformism; monitoring. A test of the full model with all seven predictors against a constant-only model was statistically reliable, \( \chi^2(7, N = 68) = 3.88, p = 0.001 \), indicating that the predictors, as a set, reliably distinguish between successful students of Dutch background and successful Turkish - and Moroccan-background students.
SUCCESSFUL MIGRANT STUDENTS’ PARENTS

TABLE 3

RESULTS LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS CONCERNING RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS AND UPPRISING FOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESSFUL TURKISH/MOROCCAN AND DUTCH BACKGROUND STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Wald test (x-ratio)</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Odds Ratio Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td>-3.56</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond with parents</td>
<td>-1.32</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.904</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strictness</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.967</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.803</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>-1.57</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>14.36</td>
<td>7.84</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at the z-ratios, the most important predictors for distinguishing between the successful Turkish/Moroccan - and Dutch-background students were the bond with parents, responsiveness, and attachment. Students who are more attached to and have a stronger bond with their parents, are much less likely to be of Turkish or Moroccan than of Dutch background (odds ratios 0.03 and 0.27; mean scores attachment T/M:2.8 vs. D:3.3; bond with parents T/M: 2.7 vs. D: 3.4). Although the mean scores are in a different direction (T/M: 3.8; D: 4.3), with an increase in the responsiveness of the parents by one, a student is 3.6 times more likely to be of Turkish/Moroccan than of Dutch background. The groups do not differ significantly in monitoring; this variable added very little to the explanation of the difference between successful Turkish/Moroccan - and Dutch-background students. The prediction success was 79%, compared with 50% by chance alone.

Next we discuss the differences between successful and less successful Turkish and Moroccan and Dutch background students. For the Turkish - and Moroccan-background students, a direct logistic-regression analysis was performed on school success as outcome (successful or less successful) and the seven predictors assessing upbringing and the relationship of the students with their parents. The results are shown in Table 4. A test of the full model with all seven predictors against a constant-only model was not statistically reliable, $\chi^2(7, N = 73)= 8.52, p = 0.289$, indicating that the predictors, as a set, did not reliably distinguish between successful and less successful students of Turkish and Moroccan background. A model with the variables “bond with parents”, “attachment” and “responsiveness” did reliably distinguish both groups: $\chi^2(3, N = 73)= 7.87, p = 0.049$ (mean scores successful vs. less successful Turkish/Moroccan background students: bond with parents 2.7 vs 3.2, attachment 2.8 vs 2.9 and responsiveness 3.8 vs. 4.1). The prediction success rate was 75%.
Table 4 shows that bond with parents is the best predictor for success: students of Turkish or Moroccan background having a less strong bond with their parents were more likely to be academically successful. The mean scores for the Dutch-background students were in the same direction, however none of the results were significant (mean scores successful vs. less successful Dutch background students: bond with parents 3.4 vs. 3.5, attachment 3.3 vs. 3.2 and responsiveness 4.3 vs. 4.4).

## Conclusion

Little was known about the relationships of successful students from ethnic minorities with their parents or about the parenting practices of their parents. In this study the successful Turkish/Moroccan-background students not only had a poorer relationship with their parents than did the successful Dutch-background students; they also had a poorer relationship with their parents than did the less successful Turkish/Moroccan-background students. Although it was expected that students having a better relationship with their parents would be more likely to be successful because of better psychological well-being, the result that the successful students did not want to be like their parents is explainable. Data on personal characteristics of the students showed that the successful Turkish - and Moroccan-background students were more determined than the less successful to attain a higher education than their parents (Van der Veen, 2001). As mentioned above, compared with students whose parents have a Dutch background and low socio-economic status, the Turkish - and Moroccan-background students had parents whose educational levels were considerably lower, or even nonexistent. For the successful Turkish - and Moroccan-background students the social distance between them and their parents was widened more than for the
less successful Turkish- and Moroccan-background students or for the students of Dutch background.

Strong parental support has been found to be positive for the psychological well-being of children which is a condition for school success. In the present study, the successful Turkish/Moroccan students’ parents showed more responsiveness to students’ needs, signals and moods than did the parents of the successful Dutch-background students. However, the parents of both the successful and less successful students of Turkish/Moroccan and Dutch background did not differ in this respect. The students indicated they experienced little support from their parents. Perhaps the parents differ in the degree to which they support their children. We did not study the degree of responsiveness of the parents separately. Further analysis shows that for both the successful Dutch- and Turkish/Moroccan-background students, the mothers were more responsive than the fathers. However, for the successful Turkish/Moroccan-background students this difference was significant, while this was not the case for the less successful students from the same ethnic background. This may indeed be an indication that mothers are more important for the successful students of Turkish/Moroccan background.

Studies of the parenting practices of Turkish- and Moroccan-background parents without distinguishing different success groups show that Turkish- and Moroccan-background parents are more authoritarian than the parents of Dutch-background students, while the Dutch-background students’ parents are more authoritative. Except for monitoring, the results in this study concerning this topic also point systematically in this direction, although the differences are small. Furthermore, the results for the differences between successful and less successful Turkish/Moroccan-background students show that the parents of the less successful students were somewhat more authoritarian (not significant, but a trend). The finding indicates that authoritarian parenting might affect the school careers of Turkish/Moroccan-background students unfavourably. For the Dutch-background students (although not significant) most differences in mean scores were in the same direction. This is evidence that, for Dutch-, Turkish-, and Moroccan-background students, the same processes play a role concerning the effect of parenting on academic success.

The largest differences between the successful and less successful students concern the relationship with the parents. The successful students’ less satisfactory relationship with their parents is most likely a consequence of academic success. Their parents’ parenting style does seem to be a factor in the success of Turkish- and Moroccan-background students. This may also be related to the socio-economic status of parents (Nijsten, 1998; Pels, 1998). In this study we have compared the school career patterns of different groups of students. Nevertheless, as students were asked only once about their parents, it is difficult
to determine the causal relationships between parenting characteristics and the academic performance of adolescents. To be able to determine this, in future research, longitudinal data on parenting practices and the school career should be gathered.

REFERENCES


