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Mother's parental behaviour in the context of perception of child's temperament and adult attachment to own mother

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Abstract

Parental behaviour can be influenced by various factors related to the characteristics of the child, the parent and the context. It can be assumed that a combination of child's temperament and quality of mother's adult attachment to the own mother can, to a certain extent, contribute to explaining parental behaviours. Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine whether mother's perception of child's temperamental dimensions and mother's adult attachment to the own mother can predict mother's parental behaviour. 203 mothers of preschool-aged children participated in this study. EAS Temperament Questionnaire (Buss & Plomin, 1984) was used to examine mother's perception of child's temperament in terms of child's emotionality, activity, and sociability. Mother's adult attachment to the own mother was assessed by Modified Experiences in Close Relationship Inventory (Kamenov & Jelić, 2003) measuring anxiety and avoidance in the relationship with their own mother. Parental behaviour was assessed by Parental Behaviour Questionnaire (Keresteš, Brković, Kuterovac Jagodić & Greblo, 2012). Results indicated that the perception of a higher level of child's emotionality as well as a higher level of anxiety in attachment to the own mother contribute to lower parental support. Further, the perception of a higher level of child's emotionality also contributes to a higher level of mother's restrictive control. Finally, mothers whose adult attachment to the own mother is characterized by a higher level of anxiety are more likely to be permissive to their own child. Results obtained in this study are in line with some previous studies implying that the perception of child's temperamental dimensions and adult attachment to the own mother can predict mother's parental behaviour.

Key words: mother's parental behaviour, child's temperament, mother's attachment to own mother, adult attachment

Numerous studies are focused on parental styles, behaviours and rearing practices as important factors influencing the emotional climate of the child-parent interaction and developmental outcomes. Most commonly used model for describing various parental practices and parental styles is the one proposed by Baumrind describing authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting style. Parenting style, according to Darling and Steinberg (1993) can be best described as “a contextual variable that moderates the relationship between specific parenting practices and specific developmental outcomes” (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 493). These specific parenting practices or behaviours have also been the focus of numerous studies aimed at examining their relationship with specific developmental outcomes. Different authors propose various but still rather similar dimensions or classifications of these behaviours. For example, Schaefer (1965; as cited in Čudina-Obradović & Obradović, 2006) proposed a three-dimensional classification of parental behaviour: Acceptance/Rejection, Firm control/Lax control, and Psychological control/Psychological autonomy. On the other side, Barber, Maughan, and Olsen (2005) introduce Parental support as a dimension including acceptance and warmth, and also propose a distinction between Behavioural control and Psychological control. Parental behaviour can be influenced by various factors - individual, as well as contextual and cultural, and can also vary depending on child's age. Having in mind potential cultural differences, Keresteš, Brković, Kuterovac Jagodić and Greblo (2012) conducted research on a sample of Croatian parents and children and described parental behaviour through three global dimensions: Parental support (referring to warmth, autonomy, knowledge and inductive reasoning), Restrictive control (referring to punishment and intrusiveness) and Permissiveness. In spite of certain intraindividual variations, studies indicate that the general structure of parental behaviour is stable regardless of the developmental level of the child (Keresteš et al., 2012). The parental general tendency to be authoritative, authoritarian or permissive can reflect in their specific behaviours in everyday interactions with children. As already mentioned, specific parental behaviour can be affected by various individual and contextual characteristics, as proposed by a process model of parenting (Belsky, 1984). For example, parental beliefs about the nature of development and possibility of influencing the course of development and developmental outcomes can significantly affect parental behaviour. Further, experiences with own parents as models of behaviour can also shape parental behaviour in adulthood, as well as cultural expectations regarding parental role. Individual characteristics of children are also among factors influencing parental behaviour. Among various factors affecting parental behaviour, this study is focused on the mother's perception of child's temperament and mother's adult attachment to the own mother.

Early emotional experiences certainly play a significant role in the emotional development and well-being in childhood and in adulthood as well. Parents shape emotional climate, but emotional development is also related to child's temperament as one of the determinants of child's emotional development. Temperamental characteristics can be observed very early in life: variations regarding, for example, arousal, alertness or reactions to discomfort, can be noticed even among infants, and temperament can display stability through one's lifetime, but can also undergo changes and modifications in interaction with environmental factors (Buss & Plomin, 2014). New York Longitudinal Study conducted by Thomas, Chess and colleagues (1986), as well as Bell's conceptualization of socialization as an interactive process of child and parent/caregiver have made a significant contribution to comprehending that children play an active role in shaping their social interactions (Putnam, Sanson & Rothbart, 2002). This perspective provided an impetus for studying this interaction in relation to developmental outcomes. A substantial number of studies has been focused on child's temperament and its role in child-environment interaction and developmental outcomes, especially in relation to behavioural problems (Mathiesen & Tambs, 1999; De Pauw, Mervielde & Van Leeuwen, 2009). Approaches to temperament and operationalization of temperamental dimensions can vary. One of the most commonly used perspectives in temperament research is the Buss and Plomin's EAS model referring to relatively stable individual differences whose origin is in heritage (Zentner & Shiner, 2012). EAS model includes temperamental dimensions Emotionality, Activity, and Sociability. Emotionality is described by the level of emotional reactions and emotional arousal (from no reactions to extreme reactions). Activity refers to the level of overall energy in child's behaviour, while Sociability is defined as the tendency to be in the presence of others (Zentner & Shiner, 2012). Along with these traits, studies have also focused on Shyness (as a trait appearing in interactions with strangers), however, some results indicated that this trait is hard to separate from Sociability for the younger age groups (Buss & Plomin, 2014). Longitudinal studies have confirmed the stability of these traits; hence temperament in childhood can be one of the predictors of later developmental outcomes (Bould, Joinson, Sterne & Araya, 2013). Some studies have also established interaction between child's temperament and parental behaviour, indicating that more sociable children elicit more responsive parenting and more demanding children elicit parental withdrawal (Putnam, Sanson & Rothbart, 2002) as well as more coercive and highly controlling parenting, especially mothering

(Laukkanen, Ojansuu, Tolvanen, Alatupa & Aunola, 2014). On the other side, some studies did not confirm these results, implying that some other variables may intervene in this relationship, for example child's age and gender, or various characteristics of parents.

Within the context of this study, one of the important factors related to characteristics of the parents is certainly the relationship with own parents; a relationship important over the life course (Umberson, 1992; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) with the attachment to parents/caretakers being the most important emotional relationship in childhood. Although manifestations of attachment in childhood differ from those in adulthood, own parents can still provide the feeling of a secure base in adulthood as well, but this feeling is built from the earliest age. Mental representations formed in childhood affect the scope of emotional reactions and related behaviours in adulthood (Bowlby, 1973). More specifically, emotional relationship and attachment that were built from the earliest age can shape self-concept and beliefs about the social world (Collins & Read, 1990) and as such can affect different close (emotional) relationships in adulthood as well (Colin, 1996; Kamenov & Jelić, 2003; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Studies have demonstrated the relationship between parental behaviour and adult attachment (Adam, Gunnar & Tanaka, 2004). Adults who are securely attached more often describe their parents as being accepting than adults who are anxious or avoidant (Collins & Read, 1990). van IJzendoorn (1995) indicates that "individual differences in the parents' mental representations of attachment are thought to determine their responsiveness to the child's attachment signals and, therefore, to direct the child's socioemotional development" (van IJzendoorn, 1995, p. 387). Jones, Cassidy, and Shaver (2015) also emphasise the importance of parents' own attachment within the context of appropriate parental responsiveness to child's needs and the balance between the child and parent. With respect to this, parental responsiveness to child's signals and needs can be observed through the perspective of parental beliefs and rearing practices. Namely, it can be assumed that parents' mental representation of attachment affects the quality of their adult attachment (not only in the relationship with a partner but with their own parents as well), which further affects their interaction with the child and reflects through rearing practices and parental behaviour. Additionally, attachment styles can also be related to the level of parental stress and personal meaning of parenting in general (Rholes, Simpson & Friedman, 2006), as well as to parental self-efficacy (Kohlhoff & Barnett, 2013). Carpenter (2001) indicates that the interest in attachment in adulthood is increasing and leading to an extended body of knowledge based on the research on attachment in childhood. Jones, Cassidy, and Shaver (2015) in their review of studies relating general attachment styles and parental behaviour point out the association between less supportive parenting and attachment-related avoidance, and also note that the findings related to anxiety dimension are less consistent.

However, studies relating to attachment and parenting usually use either estimations of attachment to own parents based on autobiographical memories (of childhood) or estimations of attachment in the context of an adult romantic relationship, while there is a lack of studies exploring this relationship from the perspective of (current) adult attachment to own parents. Therefore, this study is focused on certain factors assuming to be related to parental behaviour. More specifically, the aim of this study is to examine whether mothers' perception of child's temperamental dimensions (emotionality, activity, and sociability) and dimensions of adult attachment to the own mother (anxiety and avoidance) can predict mothers' parental behaviour. Based on the previous findings, it was assumed that child's emotionality and mother's adult attachment-related avoidance to the own mother would negatively predict mother's parental support and positively predict mother's restrictive control. Further, it was hypothesised that attachment-related anxiety negatively predicts mother's parental support and positively predicts mother's permissiveness.

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 203 mothers of preschool children (the average age of mothers was $M=35.7$ years, $SD=5.01$). Somewhat more than two-thirds of mothers (69%) have a higher level of education (a university degree), and 31% of them have a secondary school qualification. Most of them (91.6%) are employed. Nearly half of mothers (46.8%) have two children, 37.9% have one child and 15.3% have three or more children. The proportion of single-mothers in the sample is 4.5%. Participation in the research was anonymous and on a voluntary basis.

Procedure and instruments

The research was carried out in four kindergartens in Zagreb. Questionnaires (with an accompanying envelope) were distributed by kindergarten teachers to mothers who were asked to return

the completed questionnaires in a sealed envelope and to put them in the closed box prepared for that purpose. The boxes were collected from the kindergartens by the researcher. Mothers who had more than one child of preschool-age were instructed to give their ratings regarding temperament and parental behaviour in relation to one child only. Instruments measuring mother's parental behaviour, mother's adult attachment to the own mother and the perception of child's temperament are used with the consent from the authors.

Data on mother's parental behaviour was collected by the "Parental Behaviour Questionnaire" (Keresteš et al., 2012), an instrument validated in the Croatian context. The questionnaire originally consists of 29 items referring to various parental behaviours and the mothers were asked to rate the extent to which these behaviours referred to them (on a four-point scale from 1 - not at all like me, to 4 - completely like me), whereby two original items were not included due to the age of children (items related to school obligations and allowance). This questionnaire measures seven aspects of parental behaviour grouped into three broader dimensions: Parental support (for example *I enjoy doing something together with my child*; this dimension includes Warmth, which refers to emotional affection and acceptance, Autonomy referring to respecting child's psychological independence, Knowledge of child's activities, and Inductive reasoning i.e. achieving discipline by using clear explanations and arguments), Restrictive control (for example *When my child is disobedient, I send him/her to another room*; this dimension includes Punishment which refers to harsh discipline and Intrusiveness which includes criticism and attempts to control child's thoughts) and Permissiveness (for example *When my child opposes my request, I comply*). Total scores on each dimension are calculated as an average score of associated items. Cronbach's alpha for the Parental support was .81, for the Restrictive control .69, and for the Permissiveness .73.

Mother's attachment to the own mother as one aspect of adult attachment was assessed by the "Modified Experiences in Close Relationship Inventory", originally constructed by Brennan, Clark and Shaver (1998) and modified by Kamenov and Jelić (2003), whereby the modification presents a shorter version adapted for measuring adult attachment in other close relationships as well (apart from romantic ones); in this case measuring adult attachment to the own mother. The modified inventory consists of 18 items measuring two attachment dimensions – Avoidance (uncomfortableness being close to mother; for example *I don't feel comfortable opening up to my mother*) and Anxiety (fear of rejection or abandonment; for example *I worry that my mother won't care about me as much as I care about her*). Mothers were asked to rate to which extent they experienced certain feelings in the relationship with their own mother. Ratings were given on a seven-point rating scale (1 - completely disagree, to 7 - completely agree) and total scores on each dimension are calculated as an average score of associated items. Based on the combination of results on each dimension, it is possible to categorise participants' attachment style. However, Kamenov, Jelić and Lotar Rihtarić (2014) as well as Jones, Cassidy and Shaver (2015) emphasise that most authors agree that adult attachment should be approached in terms of dimensions rather than categories. Therefore, in this study mothers' results on this scale will be approached in terms of dimensions. Cronbach's alpha for the Avoidance and Anxiety scales were .85 and .77 respectively.

Data on child's temperament was collected by "The EAS Temperament Questionnaire" (Buss & Plomin, 1984; Buss & Plomin, 2014). This instrument consists of 15 items in total and comprises parental ratings of three dimensions of child's temperament appearing early in life – Emotionality which describes the tendency to get emotionally distressed easily (5 items; for example *He/She gets upset easily*), Activity which refers to the intensity and frequency of child's actions and energy (5 items; for example *He/She is always on the go*) and Sociability which is described by the child's preference for being in company of others instead of being alone (5 items; for example, *He/She makes friends easily*). Ratings were given on a five-point rating scale (1 - not characteristic of my child at all, to 5 - very characteristic of my child) and total scores on each temperamental dimension are calculated as an average score of associated items. Cronbach's alpha was .71 for the Emotionality, .71 for the Activity and .74 for the Sociability.

Results

A brief overview of the descriptive indicators presented in Table 1 generally reveals that the mothers who participated in this study described their parental behaviour as being dominantly characterised by Parental Support, and to a lesser extent by Restrictive control and Permissiveness. Further, they perceived their children relatively high on Sociability and Activity, and somewhat lower on Emotionality. Finally, mothers' adult attachment to their own mothers was characterised by a rather low level of Avoidance and an even lower level of Anxiety.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for parental behaviour, child's temperament and mother's attachment to own mother

	<i>N of items</i>	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>max</i>
<i>Parental behaviour</i>						
Parental support	15	.81	3.58	0.319	2.43	4.00
Restrictive control	9	.69	2.33	0.437	1.30	3.40
Permissiveness	3	.73	2.31	0.642	1.00	4.00
<i>Child's temperament</i>						
Emotionality	5	.71	2.43	0.655	1.00	4.00
Activity	5	.71	3.31	0.726	1.20	5.00
Sociability	5	.74	3.59	0.559	1.80	4.80
<i>Mother's attachment to own mother</i>						
Avoidance	9	.85	2.68	1.150	1.00	6.33
Anxiety	9	.77	1.95	0.884	1.00	5.67

Since the perception of child's temperament as well as parental behaviour can differ depending on child's gender (Leaper, 2002), it was examined whether this variable is relevant in this study. Therefore, prior to the analyses related to the aim of this study, mothers' ratings of child's temperamental dimensions for girls and boys were compared. Results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in mothers' perception of children's temperament with regard to gender ($t_{\text{emotionality}}=-1.20$, $t_{\text{activity}}=.91$; $t_{\text{sociability}}=-0.80$), hence gender was not included as a variable in further analyses. According to Buss and Plomin (2014) potential differences between girls and boys in Activity before the age of four are not common, and the average age of assessed children in this study was 4.04, thus no differences between ratings for girls and boys were expected. Further, it was examined whether the mothers differed in their parental behaviour with regard to child's gender and obtained results indicated no significant differences as well ($t_{\text{parental support}}=1.61$, $t_{\text{restrictive control}}=.66$; $t_{\text{permissiveness}}=-1.58$) which is in line with some previous findings indicating that mothers' (unlike fathers') parental behaviour does not differ with regard to child's gender (Kosterman, Haggerty, Spoth & Redmond, 2004; Macuka, 2010).

To examine whether mother's perception of child's temperament and her attachment to the own mother (in terms of attachment-related avoidance and anxiety) predict dimensions of mother's parental behaviour, regression analyses were calculated with the same set of predictors for each dimension of mother's parental behaviour.

Table 2

Results of regression analyses for Parental Support, Restrictive Control and Permissiveness as criterion variables and child/s temperamental traits and mother's attachment to own mother as predictors

Predictors	Parental support ¹		Restrictive control ²		Permissiveness ³	
	β	<i>t</i>	β	<i>t</i>	β	<i>t</i>
<i>Child's temperament</i>						
Emotionality	-.20	-2.40*	.25	2.75**	.05	0.65
Activity	.03	0.40	.12	1.25	.15	1.93
Sociability	.04	0.44	.03	0.35	-.02	-0.28
<i>Mother's attachment to own mother</i>						
Avoidance	-.06	-0.70	-.03	-0.33	-.06	-0.72
Anxiety	-.18	-2.21*	.04	0.40	.26	3.23**

Notes:

¹-regression on Parental support: $R=.30$; $R^2=.09$; $F=2.77^*$

²-regression on Restrictive control: $R=.30$; $R^2=.09$; $F=2.33^*$

³-regression on Permissiveness: $R=.31$; $R^2=.10$; $F=3.31^{**}$

*- $p<.05$; **- $p<.01$

Results presented in Table 2 indicate that significant predictors of mother's Parental support are the perception of child's Emotionality and Anxiety as a dimension of adult attachment to own mother. More specifically, the fewer mothers perceive emotionality in their children and the less anxious they are in relation to own mothers, the more parental support they provide to their children.

Further, results also indicate that Restrictive control is predicted only by the perception of child's Emotionality while other predictors are not significant for this dimension of mother's parental behaviour. Hence, the more Emotionality children express, the more restrictive and controlling their mothers are. Mother's attachment to the own mother did not have a significant role in explaining mother's Restrictive control.

Finally, results displayed in Table 2 reveal that a significant predictor of mother's Permissiveness is the level of Anxiety as a dimension of attachment to own mother. More specifically, the more anxious mothers are about the relationship with own mothers, their parenting is more likely to be permissive. Child's temperamental dimensions were not significant predictors of mother's Permissiveness. Additionally, attachment-related avoidance was not related to mother's parental behaviour.

Discussion

Contribution of child's temperament in explaining parental behaviour

Obtained results confirmed certain expectations based on what was previously known from the studies relating parental behaviour and child's temperament. Mothers who perceive that their children express more emotionality tend to display less parental support compared to those who perceive a lower level of emotionality in their children. These results are not surprising since everyday interactions with children who express higher emotionality (which usually includes irritability, demandingness and more extreme and negative emotional reactions) probably include more challenging and boundary-testing situations and, according to previous research, these children are more prone to externalizing behaviours (De Pauw, Mervielde & Van Leeuwen, 2009), especially when mothers are harsh (Miner & Clarke-Stewart, 2008). In such situations, patience and reasoning with children are harder to apply, and these children are also more challenging in terms of comforting, soothing, guiding and controlling (Putnam, Sanson & Rothbart, 2002). The same authors say that in spite of often ambiguous results relating parenting and child's temperament, various studies allow general conclusion that parents are warmer and more responsive with more adaptable children, and less warm and responsive with more irritable and demanding children, hence the results obtained in this study are in line with this general conclusion and also imply that these children are potentially more vulnerable to effects of less optimal parenting (Kiff, Lengua & Zalewski, 2011). In addition, the possibility of mother's distorted perception of own competence should also be taken into consideration when discussing the obtained results. Namely, child's temperament is one of the factors affecting parental sense of competence (Čudina-Obradović & Obradović, 2006; Kohlhoff & Barnett, 2013) and it can be assumed that some mothers whose children tend to be more prone to negative emotionality evaluate the level of own supportiveness lower because their children, in spite of the efforts, still seem unsatisfied, and as such diminish mother's sense of competence. As expected, the obtained results also indicated that child's emotionality positively predicts the level of mother's restrictive control. In line with the afore-mentioned, it seems that, in addition to eliciting less parental warmth and support, children who express a higher level of irritability, demandingness and negative emotionality also elicit more restrictive and controlling parenting. Similar results were obtained in the study conducted by Laukkanen et al. (2014), where child's negative emotionality was positively related to mother's behavioural and psychological control. On the other side, child's level of sociability and activity did not predict dimensions of parental behaviour. According to Buss and Plomin (2014) assessing sociability of younger children could be difficult, in general, since parents are those who control the child's social context and exposure, although there are studies which obtained a relationship between child's sociability and maternal sensitivity (Selcuk, Günaydin, Sumer, Harma, Salman, Hazan, Dogruyol & Ozturk, 2010). As far as child's activity is concerned, it can be assumed that mothers expect the higher level of activity with regard to their children's age, thus not perceiving that as a problem, unlike negative emotionality which is perceived as a difficulty. The obtained results imply that child's negative emotionality could be the "hardest" for mothers to cope with, thus reflecting on her parenting.

According to the results, child's temperamental dimensions are not significant predictors of mothers Permissiveness. This result can be interpreted from the perspective of previous results, which indicated that regarding child's temperament emotionality is the only dimension related to the other two dimensions of parental behaviour. In the light of these results, it can be concluded that mothers who

participated in this study cope with the child's negative emotionality by reducing warmth and/or by increasing the level of control and restrictiveness.

Contribution of mother's attachment to own mother in explaining parental behaviour

The contribution of mother's attachment to the own mother, more specific mother's attachment-related anxiety in explaining mother's parental behaviour is, as expected, obtained in the case of parental support and permissiveness, while restrictive control was not predicted by this dimension. The results indicate that the lower level of mother's anxiety in attachment to own mother facilitates supportive parental behaviours and less permissiveness. In line with the literature, it can be hypothesised that the quality of mother's adult attachment to own mother indirectly affects her parental behaviour. Namely, mother's internal working models of emotional relationships and attachment are built from the childhood and can demonstrate cross-age continuity (Collins & Read, 1990; Hautamäki, Hautamäki, Neuvonen & Maliniemi-Piispanen, 2010). These internal working models include beliefs about responsiveness and supportiveness. It can be assumed that attachment-related anxiety in attachment to own mother, resulting from the lack of support in childhood, may lead to decreased provision of parental support to own child, as obtained in this study. Both categorical and dimensional approaches to attachment measures indicate the relationship between the quality of parental attachment and parental responsiveness. Accordingly, insecurely attached mothers (compared to securely attached) are less attuned to their infants and display lack of consistency in responding to child's affect states (Haft & Slade, 1989), and insecure parental attachment style is also characterized by less parental involvement and more negative parental behaviour (Adam, Gunnar & Tanaka, 2004; Coyl, Newland & Freeman, 2010; La Valley & Guerrero, 2012; Millings, Walsh, Hepper & O'Brian, 2013), and experiences in childhood can be related to parental behaviour in adulthood. Goldberg, MacKay-Soroka and Rochester (1994) obtained that when interacting with their children, mothers of secure infants pay attention to both positive and negative emotions while mothers of insecure infants either focus on negative affect or rarely comment feelings at all implying the relationship between maternal behaviour and the quality of child's attachment. At preschool age secure children and their mothers discussed emotions more often, and they demonstrated a better understanding of emotions. This effect of parental behaviour on emotional development can be considered as an underlying mechanism of trans-generational transmission of parental behaviour. Similar conclusions regarding adult attachment and parenting can be drawn from studies using dimensional approach to attachment which indicate the association between attachment-related avoidance and less supportive parenting (Selcuk et al., 2010; Berlin, Whiteside-Mansell, Roggman, Green, Robinson & Spieker, 2011) and attachment-related anxiety and maternal sensitivity (Selcuk et al., 2010). The results obtained in this study also imply the importance of early attachment's quality for parental behaviour and for the quality of adult attachment with parents as well. Namely, it seems justified to assume that mothers who participated in this study and whose attachment-related anxiety is higher are also an example which confirms that demonstrating certain supportive parental behaviours seems to be a problem for them, making their parenting less optimal.

Mother's anxiety in attachment to own mothers, besides from being a negative predictor of parental support, also is a predictor of mother's permissiveness, but in a positive way. Anxious mothers seem to be more prone to be indulgent and to comply with child's desires. Although Jones, Cassidy, and Shaver (2015) report on inconsistency with regard to findings relating attachment anxiety, under the assumption that mother's anxiety in attachment to own mother is a result of experiencing inconsistent parenting during childhood, it was hypothesised that mothers could transfer this inconsistency in their own rearing practices. On one side, this inconsistency may lead to reduced responsiveness to the child in terms of warmth and supportiveness, but on the other side, can also lead to insecurity regarding how to behave in relation to child's demands and how to provide the structure. It is possible that these mothers may also experience anxiety in interaction with own child related to the fear of losing child's affection if they do not comply with the child's every desire. As Shaver and Mikulincer (2002) indicate, anxiety can lead to hyper activation of attachment system, and it is possible that these mothers perceive indulgence as a way to develop closeness with the child, instead of using supportive behaviours. However, further studies are needed to clarify these results.

Although, in the context of trans-generational transmission, it could be expected that (apart from anxiety) a higher level of avoidance in attachment to own mothers would also be related to mothers' parental behaviour, more specifically to lower parental support due to an assumed lower level of experienced responsiveness in own childhood and its relation to avoidant attachment tendencies (Rholes, Simpson & Friedman, 2006; Jones, Cassidy & Shaver, 2015), results did not confirm this relationship. Avoidance is, in this study, positively correlated with anxiety ($r=.30$; $p<.001$), implying that mothers who are more anxious are at the same time more avoidant in the relationship to own mothers. However, this

dimension, unlike anxiety, did not contribute to explaining either parental support or restrictive control. Hence, expectations regarding generally lower warmth and supportiveness for both dimensions of adult attachment to own mother are only partially confirmed. One possibility is that mother's attachment-related avoidance is, unlike anxiety, less relevant in this stage of child's life than it is in adolescence when adolescents are prone to turning away from parents in the search for autonomy. Additionally, it is also possible that the lack of security in mother's adult attachment to own mother is partly compensated with a secure adult attachment to the partner since, according to Kamenov, Jelić and Lotar Rihtarić (2014) some findings from the literature imply that people have the tendency to realize secure attachment in at least one close relationship. However, this assumption is beyond the scope of this study and further studies are needed to explore this possibility.

Conclusion

Parental behaviour can be affected by numerous factors, from individual characteristics of parents and children, to various contextual factors. This study indicated that perception of child's temperamental traits as well as characteristics of mother's adult attachment to the own mother can, to a certain level, contribute to explaining parental behaviour. More specifically, child's emotionality, on the one hand, can contribute to mother's less supportive and more controlling behaviours, while mother's attachment-related anxiety as a dimension of adult attachment to the own mother, on the other, can facilitate or hinder supportive parental behaviours as well as permissiveness. In the context of obtained results, it should be emphasised that supportive and responsive parenting becomes even more important in the case of children prone to negative emotionality since it can lead to positive developmental outcomes by suppressing "difficult" side of child's temperament. Namely, difficult temperament is not a problem *per se*; it can become a problem when combined with inadequate parenting. The combination of "difficult" child and over controlling mother who lacks parental supportiveness and warmth could be considered as potentially high-risk dyad that can lead to undesired developmental outcomes. Belsky and Barends (2002) emphasise that parents can be responsive and supportive if they feel secure in their own lives and if they possess maturity, which contributes to staying supportive and firm even when child's behaviour is frustrating. In this context, quality of attachment to own parents can significantly contribute to developing the feeling of security in own life.

Some limitations of this study should also be addressed, and bearing in mind numerous factors potentially affecting parental behaviour, caution in drawing conclusions is necessary. The average age of children that ratings in this study relate to is four years; hence future studies should include school-aged children and adolescents as well. Since child's age is one of the factors related to parental behaviour, it seems plausible that the relationship between mothers' parental behaviour and dimensions of adult attachment to the own mother can vary depending on child's age, especially in adolescence. Further, mothers who participated in this study displayed a relatively low level of attachment-related avoidance and anxiety, and present a relatively small and homogenous sample with regard to education and employment status (most of the mothers have a higher level of education and are employed), thus it would be useful to conduct similar research on a more heterogeneous and larger sample, and to include adult attachment to fathers as well. Additionally, the level of emotional and instrumental support obtained from the partner (or other significant people in mother's life), as well as attachment to the partner should also be included in further studies since these variables can intervene in the relationship between mother's parental behaviour, attachment to the own mother and child's temperament.

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