



Parental monitoring and internalizing/externalizing problem behaviors in adolescents: Parental perception

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between parental monitoring and adolescent problem behaviors, using data collected directly from parents and based explicitly on parental reports. A correlational research design was employed to examine parental monitoring, its sources, and adolescents' internalizing and externalizing problems. The sample consisted of 183 parents whose children were between 12 and 17 years of age and attended middle or high school. Data were collected through the face-to-face administration of standardized measures. One-way MANOVA was conducted to examine group differences, and structural equation modeling was used to analyze relationships among the variables. The results indicated that mothers reported higher levels of monitoring than fathers and parents monitored their daughters more closely than their sons. Parents reported higher self-disclosure and internalizing problems for girls. Parental monitoring was positively associated with internalizing problems and negatively associated with externalizing problems. In addition, child self-disclosure, parental solicitation, and parental control were found to be significant positive predictors of parental monitoring. The findings suggest that parental monitoring plays an important role in adolescents' behavioral outcomes, potentially increasing internalizing problems while decreasing externalizing problems. These results provide important insights into understanding and preventing adolescent problem behaviors within the context of parental monitoring.

Keywords: Adolescence; Externalizing; Internalizing; Parental monitoring; Problem behaviors

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by significant biopsychosocial changes, during which problem behaviors may adversely affect development and quality of life (Dahl et al., 2018; Shifflet-Chila et al., 2016). Externalizing problems that emerge during childhood and adolescence are a public health concern due to the associated delinquency and antisocial behaviors (Odgers et al., 2008). The terms "internalizing" and "externalizing" refer to two broad categories of behavioral and emotional problems (Achenbach et al., 2016). Internalizing problems encompass less observable, inwardly directed difficulties (e.g., anxiety, depression, withdrawal), whereas externalizing problems comprise outwardly directed behaviors such as aggression, impulsivity, and hyperactivity (Achenbach, 2020; Nikstat & Riemann, 2020). In a related vein, research on stressful life events suggests that mental health difficulties and delinquency-related outcomes may be connected within broader models of adolescent adjustment, although such findings do not directly test the internalizing-externalizing pathway examined in the present study (Altakhayneh, 2023). Mental health problems, including internalizing and externalizing disorders, are significant contributors to disability among adolescents aged 15 to 19, accounting for 45% of the global disease burden (The Lancet, 2017).

Internalizing and externalizing problems, which are parts of the group of emotional and behavioral problems, are associated with various maladaptive outcomes (Papachristou & Flouri, 2020). These problems also constitute risk factors for psychopathology, with consequences that persist into adulthood (Nikstat & Riemann, 2020; Jones, 2013). Early internalizing and externalizing problems have been associated with a range of maladaptive consequences in psychological and social domains (Arslan et al., 2021). These consequences include depressive and avoidant personality problems, an increased risk for a variety of emotional and behavioral disorders (Korhonen et al., 2018); non-compliance with rules (Reef et al., 2010); and difficulties in self-perception, peer relationships, and sexuality (Benzi et al., 2023). In general, elevated levels of

internalizing problems during adolescence are shown to predict an increased likelihood of internalizing disorders in adulthood. Conversely, higher levels of externalizing problems during adolescence are associated with a greater probability of developing externalizing disorders in adulthood (Van der Ende et al., 2020). Problem behaviors during adolescence are also associated with various negative consequences such as substance abuse (Augustyn et al., 2022; Willis et al., 2022), gambling (Richard et al., 2023), poor school belonging (Yıldırım et al., 2023), and health risks (Edwards et al., 2016).

Research indicates that through awareness of adolescents' daily activities and information sharing, healthier development is supported (Byrne et al., 2017). Parental monitoring, by increasing parents' knowledge about their adolescents, enables them to guide and support their children and implement preventive measures that reduce negative outcomes (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Keijsers, 2015). Parental monitoring is regarded as an efficacious method of regulating adolescent behavior (Patterson et al., 1998). The conceptual and practical model of parenting, as outlined by Dishion and McMahon (1998), traces the origins of monitoring back to the early crime studies that demonstrated that parents of delinquent adolescents were often unaware of their children's daily activities, whereabouts, and peers (Crouter & Head, 2002). According to the extant literature, the concept of parental monitoring can be defined as parents' familiarity with their children's lives and daily routines (Dishion & McMahon, 1998) and as parental awareness of activities and whereabouts (Kerns et al., 2001). It can also be conceptualized as a set of concrete, information-gathering behaviors encompassing all caregiver actions aimed at learning about adolescents' activities, environments, companions, experienced events, stressors, and behaviors (Pelham et al., 2024).

Parental monitoring has also been linked to how parents obtain information about adolescents' friends, activities, and whereabouts (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Parents obtain information through three sources: child disclosure, parental solicitation, and parental control. Self-disclosure involves voluntary sharing by adolescents, solicitation refers to parents' active information-seeking, and control includes regulating behavior through rules and supervision. Child self-disclosure is considered the most effective source of the information parents obtain through monitoring (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin & Kerr, 2000).

There are varying findings regarding the relationship between parental monitoring and internalizing and externalizing problems. A substantial body of studies suggests that parental monitoring is associated with a reduction in both internalized and externalized problem behaviors (Bacikova-Sleskova et al., 2024; Nichols & Tanner-Smith, 2022; Piquart, 2017; Yang et al., 2023). Furthermore, the correlation between parenting practices and these problems appears consistent across various cultural contexts, including Asia, Europe, Eurasia, and North America (Vazsonyi et al., 2022). However, some studies indicate that evidence regarding the prediction of externalization problems by parental monitoring are limited (Vrolijk et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the literature emphasizes the fundamental role of parenting practices in supporting the healthy development of adolescents. Addressing internalizing and externalizing behaviors in adolescence within the framework of parental monitoring is crucial for clarifying the role of parenting in understanding the nature of problem behaviors. However, the extant literature includes a limited number of studies that examine parental monitoring and problem behaviors together based on parental reports. The majority of existing research relies on adolescent self-reports, creating a notable gap in the literature. This study addresses this limitation by examining the relationships between parental monitoring and problem behaviors using parent-reported data. Furthermore, studies investigating the relationship between parenting practices and adolescent problem behaviors are relatively scarce in Turkish literature. It is expected that this study will contribute to the literature by providing insights into cross-cultural differences in parental monitoring practices and their associations with problem behaviors.

1.2. Aim of the Study

Based on parental reports, this study aimed to explore the relationships between parental

monitoring and parental monitoring sources (self-disclosure, parental solicitation, parental control) and internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors. Another aim was to test whether internalizing and externalizing problems, as well as monitoring and its sources, differed by the gender of adolescents and parents, based on parent-reported data. Accordingly, the following directional hypotheses, corresponding to the paths specified in the structural model, were tested:

- (1) The parental monitoring sources (self-disclosure, parental solicitation, and control) directly affect parental monitoring.
- (2) The parental monitoring directly affects internalizing and externalizing problems.
- (3) Parental monitoring sources (self-disclosure, parental solicitation, and control) indirectly affect problem behaviors through parental monitoring.
- (4) Parental monitoring and parental monitoring sources indirectly affect externalizing problems through internalizing problems.
- (5) Internalizing problems directly affect externalizing problems.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Gender

Research on parental monitoring during adolescence has revealed variations based on parental role (mother vs. father) and the adolescent's gender (Hamza & Willoughby, 2011; Keijsers, Branje, Frijns, et al., 2010; Kerr & Stattin, 2000). For instance, in studies combining adolescent, mother, and father reports, both boys and girls reported being monitored more by their mothers. However, girls indicated that they were more closely monitored by both parents compared to boys. According to maternal reports, mothers perceived that their daughters disclosed more information than their sons. Conversely, paternal reports did not demonstrate substantial gender disparities. Across adolescent, maternal, and paternal reports, it was observed that girls were more closely controlled by both parents, and that mothers exerted greater control over both daughters and sons compared to fathers (Çetin, 2015).

Some studies also indicate that boys perceive a higher degree of parental solicitation from their fathers (Baudat et al., 2020). A meta-analytic review found a normative decline in adolescents' self-disclosure, parental control, parental solicitation, and information-sharing behaviors as children transition from middle childhood to adolescence, alongside an increase in adolescents' secrecy. The most pronounced developmental changes were observed in parental control, whereas parents reported a decrease in solicitation, but adolescents did not indicate similar developmental changes (Lionetti et al., 2019).

In studies comparing immigrant and native-born Dutch adolescents, immigrant adolescents reported lower levels of parental solicitation, whereas no differences were observed in parental control or adolescent self-disclosure. Specifically, immigrant mothers reported lower levels of solicitation and adolescents' disclosure but higher levels of parental control compared to native-born mothers. A study by Delforterie et al. (2016) found no significant differences between native-born and immigrant fathers.

Studies examining problem behaviors from a gender perspective indicate that internalizing problems are more prevalent among girls, whereas externalizing problems are more prevalent among boys (Lau et al., 2021; Luijten et al., 2022). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that girls exhibit higher rates of internalizing and externalizing problems (Babicka-Wirkus et al., 2023). The present study was predicated on extant literature in the field, with the objective of examining parental monitoring and its sources, as well as internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors, within the framework of adolescent gender and parents' gender, based on parental reports.

2.2. Parental Monitoring and Monitoring Sources

Children's self-disclosure constitutes a primary and significant source of information regarding their activities and experiences (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). Stattin and Kerr (2000) noted that previous studies on parental monitoring emphasized the active efforts of parents rather than those of

adolescents, and they stated that the true source of parental monitoring (as parental knowledge) is adolescents' disclosure through actively sharing information. When adolescents share details about their daily activities with their parents, the latter acquire a more comprehensive understanding of their children. Conversely, parental knowledge is limited if adolescents are hesitant to disclose information. Similarly, Çetin's (2010) findings from multiple sources (adolescent, mother, and father) show that child disclosure is the primary predictor of parental monitoring. In addition, adolescent reports primarily predict parental control, whereas parental reports primarily predict parental solicitation. As indicated by Kerr et al. (2010), child disclosure has been identified as a substantial longitudinal predictor of parental knowledge. Adolescents' disclosures concerning their leisure activities are identified as strong predictors of parental knowledge (Keijsers, Branje, VanderValk, et al., 2010). Another words, research highlights the importance and priority of child self-disclosure in parental monitoring. This study examines the relationship between parental monitoring and its sources, based on parent reports and informed by the literature.

2.3. Parental Monitoring and Problem Behaviors

As has been noted in numerous publications, parental monitoring has been identified as a significant protective factor against problematic behaviors exhibited by adolescents (Cooke et al., 2022; Joo & Lee, 2022; Kreski et al., 2023). Research further indicates that higher levels of parental monitoring are associated with lower levels of both internalizing and externalizing problems in adolescents (Criss et al., 2015; Lopez-Tamayo et al., 2016). Laird and LaFleur (2016) found that adolescents' deviant behaviors were linked to reduced child-disclosure, parental solicitation, and control, while mothers reported similar associations with lower adolescent disclosure. Cobb (2007) emphasized that parental monitoring contributes significantly to adolescent well-being; closely monitored adolescents demonstrate better psychosocial adjustment and fewer behavioral problems. Thus, parental monitoring serves as a protective factor for adolescent psychosocial functioning (Baudat et al., 2020). Research considering the parenting climate shows that autonomy-supportive monitoring positively influences adolescent adjustment (Rodríguez-Meirinhos et al., 2020). Monitoring is also identified as a protective mechanism against anxiety, depression, and antisocial behavior (Bacchini et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2020).

Although many studies support the protective role of parental monitoring, others have found limited or no evidence that active parental monitoring—such as behavioral control and solicitation—reduces problem behaviors (Keijsers, Branje, VanderValk, et al., 2010; Symeou & Georgiou, 2017). Some research even shows that parental rule-setting and information seeking are positively associated with problem behaviors, with increased parental attempts to gather information predicting higher delinquency (Kerr et al., 2010). Fathers' online information-seeking from adolescents' peers has also been linked to higher internalizing and externalizing problems and lower prosocial behavior (Hessel et al., 2017). Parental solicitation paired with low autonomy support is further associated with increased lying (Baudat et al., 2020). Multiple studies indicate that adolescents' disclosure is more strongly and negatively related to problem behaviors than parental control or solicitation (Keijsers, Branje, VanderValk, et al., 2010; Kiesner et al., 2009; Stattin & Kerr, 2000), with delinquency more strongly predicted by low disclosure than by parental monitoring behaviors (Keijsers et al., 2009). Conversely, Eaton et al. (2009) reported that solicitation, control, and self-disclosure no longer predicted delinquency once adolescent personality traits were controlled. Based on information from the literature, this study specifically examines the relationship between parental monitoring and monitoring sources, and internalization and externalization problems, using parental reports as a basis. Taken together, the literature suggests that parental monitoring may directly influence adolescents' internalizing and externalizing problems.

2.4. Internalizing and Externalizing Problems

Although internalizing and externalizing problems often co-occur and codevelop (Perle et al., 2013;

Willner et al., 2016), the literature reports diverse explanations for their underlying mechanisms and risk factors (Overbeek et al., 2001). Current findings indicate a reciprocal process in which antecedents and consequences become indistinguishable over time (Lee & Stone, 2012). Research on their co-development proposes three main perspectives: internalizing problems may lead to externalizing problems, the reverse may occur, or they may mutually reinforce each other (Lee & Bukowski, 2012; Overbeek et al., 2001). On the other hand, a study using latent cross-lagged modeling found that externalizing problems were not associated with subsequent internalizing problems, and vice versa (Stone et al. 2015). Although the developmental ordering of these two domains remains debated, a number of longitudinal studies suggest that internalizing problems can act as an antecedent of subsequent externalizing problems (Lee & Bukowski, 2012; Overbeek et al., 2001). Building on this evidence, the present study examines the relationship between internalizing and externalizing problems, with particular attention to the effect of internalizing problems on externalizing problems.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a correlational research design. Correlational research aims to examine the relationships among two or more variables and to explore potential associations among them (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The study examined the relationships between parental monitoring, its sources, and adolescents' internalizing and externalizing problems, as well as gender-based differences in these variables, based on parental reports.

3.2. Population and Sample

The study group consisted of 188 parents of secondary school students, aged 12–17, who lived in the central districts of Ankara. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling, a type of random sampling (Campbell et al., 2020). Prior to testing the assumptions, a normality analysis was conducted and five outliers were excluded. Thus, the final sample included 183 parents (143 mothers [78.1%] and 40 fathers [21.9%]). The mean age of the participants was 40.79 years ($SD = 5.76$). Regarding educational background, three participants (1.6%) were illiterate; 40 (21.9%) had completed primary school; 28 (15.3%) had completed secondary school; 71 (38.8%) had completed high school; 17 (9.3%) had completed university; and 24 (13.1%) had completed a master's or doctoral program. Perceived Socio-demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Female	143	78.1
Male	40	21.9
Education status		
Literate	3	1.6
Primary school graduate	40	21.9
Secondary school graduate	28	15.3
High school graduate	71	38.8
College graduate	17	9.3
Post-graduate	24	13.1
Gender of children		
Female	90	49.2
Male	93	50.8
Perceived Socio-economic status		
Low	19	10.4
Medium	139	76.0
High	25	13.7

3.3. Data Collection Tools

3.3.1. Parental Monitoring and Monitoring Sources Scales

Scales developed by Kerr and Stattin (2000) to determine parental monitoring and monitoring methods (parental monitoring scale, child disclosure scale, parental solicitation scale, and parental control scale) were adapted into Turkish by Çetin (2010). During the adaptation process, separate forms were prepared for mothers and fathers to complete. Çetin (2010) also used confirmatory factor analysis [CFA] to test the construct validity of the measurement tools. Information regarding the adaptation process of the scales and their reliability in this study is provided.

3.3.2. Parental Monitoring

The term refers to parents' knowledge of their adolescent children's daily activities, whereabouts, and companions (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). They are five-point Likert-type scales including 11 items. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .89 in this study. Some scale items are as follows: "Do you know with whom your child spends free time?" and "Do you know how your child spends his money?". The reliability coefficients and fit indices of the scale in the adaptation studies are presented in Table 2. During the adaptation process of the original scale, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the 11 items was found to be .76 for mother monitoring and .88 for father monitoring (Çetin, 2010). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for parent monitoring was found to be .89.

3.3.3. Child Self-disclosure

It provides information about adolescents' self-disclosure to their parents regarding their daily activities. The scale consists of five items and uses a five-point Likert-type format. Sample items from the scale include: "Does your child talk to you about their relationships with friends?" and "Does your child talk to you about the general status of their classes at school?" Reliability coefficients and fit indices from the adaptation studies of the original scale are presented in Table 2. During the adaptation process, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was found to be .81 for self-disclosure to the mother and .83 for self-disclosure to the father (Çetin, 2010). In this study, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was found to be .92.

3.3.4. Parental Solicitation

The Parental Solicitation Scales indicate that information is obtained from adolescents through the active efforts of both parents. The scale, developed as a five-point Likert-type measure, consists of six items. Sample items include: "How often do you initiate conversations about what happens to your child during a typical school day?" Reliability coefficients and fit indices from the adaptation studies of the original scale are presented in Table 2. During the adaptation process, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was found to be .74 for the mother's parental solicitation and .75 for the father's parental solicitation (Çetin, 2010). In this study, Cronbach's alpha has been found to be .89.

3.3.5. Parental Control

The Mother/Father Control Scales are five Likert-type scales that reveal the behavioral control parents exert over adolescents' daily activities. The eight-item scale's adaptation process yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .93 for maternal control and .92 for paternal control (Çetin, 2010). The scale includes items such as, "Does your child need to explain to you where they're going, who they're meeting, and what they're doing before going out?" The Cronbach's alpha coefficient in the current study was found to be .95. The reliability coefficients and fit indices measured in the adaptation studies are shown in Table 2.

3.3.6. CBCL/6-18- Child and adolescent behavior assessment checklist for ages 6-18

The scale, which is part of the Achenbach Empirically Based Assessment System [ASEBA] (Achenbach, 2015), was used to collect data on problem behaviors of children and adolescents aged 6-18 based on information provided by their parents. The scale, consisting of 113 items, yields two

separate behavioral symptom scores: Internalizing (Anxiety/Depression, Social Withdrawal/Depression, and Somatic Complaints) and Externalizing (Rule-Breaking and Aggressive Behaviors). When the reliability of the 2001 forms of the scale was examined, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found to be .87 for internalizing and .90 for externalizing problems. According to the results of confirmatory factor analysis, the scale was found to be adequate for measuring the specified problem behaviors (RMSEA = .04) (Erol & Şimşek, 2010). In the reliability analysis conducted for this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .78 for internalizing problem behaviors and .83 for externalizing problem behaviors.

Table 2

The Validity and Reliability Results

<i>Parental perception</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	χ^2/df	<i>CFI</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>IFI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>
Mother monitoring	.76	.07	.94	.90	.96	.00
Father monitoring	.88	.53	.91	.86	.97	.00
Child disclosure to mother	.81	.98	.99	.95	.99	.075
Mother solicitation	.74	.48	.99	.97	.99	.037
Mother control	.93	.50	.92	.85	.98	.12
Child disclosure to father	.83	.83	.99	.95	.99	.07
Father solicitation	.75	.17	.92	.80	.91	.17
Father control	.92	.28	.91	.83	.97	.01

3.4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS 20 and AMOS 23. Data analysis was conducted in four steps: preliminary analyses, descriptive statistics, one-way MANOVA, and Structural Equation Modeling [SEM]. The relationships among the study variables were tested using structural equation modeling, a multivariate analytic approach that allows several dependent and independent variables to be examined simultaneously within a single theoretically grounded model. SEM was selected because it estimates both direct effects between variables and indirect (mediated) effects through intervening variables, and because it can be represented graphically as a path diagram, facilitating clearer interpretation of the hypothesized relationships. In this study, SEM was used to test whether the monitoring sources predicted parental monitoring, whether parental monitoring predicted internalizing and externalizing problems, and whether internalizing problems mediated the link between parental monitoring and externalizing problems. The adequacy of the model was evaluated using established model fit indices (Kline, 2005).

Because both MANOVA and SEM are multivariate techniques, their underlying assumptions were tested before the analyses. In the first step, preliminary analyses were performed, including checks of data-entry accuracy, examination of missing values, and assumption testing. Univariate and multivariate normality were examined, and five participants identified as outliers were excluded, yielding a final sample of 183. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was met; Levene's F tests were non-significant ($p > .05$), and Box's M test indicated that the covariance matrices of the dependent variables were equal across groups. The Durbin-Watson value (2.0) indicated no autocorrelation, and multicollinearity was not a concern, as VIF values (1.15-2.69), tolerance values (0.37-0.86), and condition indices (13.7-29.6) were all within acceptable limits.

In the second step, descriptive statistics were computed for all variables. In the third step, one-way MANOVA was conducted to examine gender-based group differences. In the final step, the structural model was estimated and tested. Model fit was assessed using the chi-square statistic, the root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA], the comparative fit index [CFI], and the additional indices reported in the Results section. The significance of the indirect effects was tested using 5,000 bootstrap samples with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals.

4. Results

Descriptive statistics for all study variables used are presented in Table 3. Parents reported relatively high levels of parental monitoring ($M = 48.02$, $SD = 7.24$) and, among the monitoring

sources, endorsed parental control most strongly ($M = 37.36$, $SD = 4.41$), followed by parental solicitation ($M = 26.27$, $SD = 4.05$) and child self-disclosure ($M = 21.10$, $SD = 4.34$). Reported internalizing ($M = 7.75$, $SD = 5.55$) and externalizing ($M = 6.47$, $SD = 5.54$) problems were comparatively low relative to the possible score ranges, although the sizeable standard deviations indicate considerable variability across parents. Overall, parents perceived their monitoring as high while rating their adolescents' problem behaviors as relatively infrequent.

Table 3
The Means and Standard Deviation of Variables

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Child disclosure	7	25	21.10	4.34
Parental Solicitation	14	30	26.27	4.05
Parental Control	23	40	37.36	4.41
Parental monitoring	16	55	48.02	7.24
Internalizing Problem Behavior	0	29	7.75	5.55
Externalizing Problem behavior	0	26	6.47	5.54

The one-way MANOVA analysis results presented in Table 4 revealed that parental monitoring, child self-disclosure, internalizing, and externalizing problem behaviors differed significantly by adolescents' gender, Wilks' $\lambda = .87$, $F(6, 176) = 3.61$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .12$. Follow-up univariate analyses revealed significant gender differences in three of the six variables. Parents of girls reported higher levels of child self-disclosure ($M = 22.21$, $SD = 3.63$) than parents of boys ($M = 20.04$, $SD = 4.70$), $F(1, 181) = 12.10$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. Likewise, girls were reported to be monitored more closely ($M = 49.46$, $SD = 7.56$) than boys ($M = 46.63$, $SD = 6.67$), $F(1, 181) = 7.17$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, and girls were rated as exhibiting more internalizing problems ($M = 8.96$, $SD = 6.03$) than boys ($M = 6.60$, $SD = 4.84$), $F(1, 181) = 8.51$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. In contrast, parental solicitation, parental control, and externalizing problems did not differ significantly by adolescents' gender ($p > .05$).

Table 4
The One-Way MANOVA Analysis Results for Adolescent's Gender and Parent's Gender

<i>Variable and Source</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>η_p^2</i>
Child self disclosure					
Girl	22.21	3.63	12.10	<.001	.06
Boy	20.04	4.70			
Parental Solicitation					
Girl	26.74	3.91	2.41	.12	.01
Boy	25.82	4.15			
Parental Control					
Girl	37.78	4.16	1.58	.21	.00
Boy	36.96	4.64			
Parental monitoring					
Girl	49.46	7.56	7.17	<.001	.03
Boy	46.63	6.67			
Internalizing Problem Behavior					
Girl	8.96	6.03	8.51	<.001	.04
Boy	6.60	4.84			
Externalizing Problem Behavior					
Girl	7.16	6.00	2.77	.09	.01
Boy	5.80	5.00			
Child disclosure					
Mother	21.51	4.22	5.73	.01	.03
Father	19.67	5.50			

Table 4 continued

Variable and Source	Mean	SD	F	p	η_p^2
Parental Solicitation					
Mother	26.46	4.15	1.52	.21	.00
Father	25.57	3.62			
Parental Control					
Mother	37.53	4.43	1.06	.30	.00
Father	36.72	4.35			
Parental monitoring					
Mother	48.65	7.43	5.03	.02	.02
Father	45.77	6.07			
Internalizing Problem Behavior					
Mother	7.98	5.65	1.08	.29	.00
Father	6.95	5.23			
Externalizing Problem behavior					
Mother	6.88	5.85	3.67	.05	.02
Father	5.00	3.98			

A second one-way MANOVA examined whether the scores differed by parents' gender. The multivariate effect was significant, Wilks' $\lambda = .91$, $F(6, 176) = 2.42$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$. Univariate follow-up tests showed that mothers reported higher levels of child self-disclosure ($M = 21.51$, $SD = 4.22$) than fathers ($M = 19.67$, $SD = 5.50$), $F(1, 181) = 5.73$, $p < .05$, and that mothers reported monitoring their children more closely ($M = 48.65$, $SD = 7.43$) than fathers ($M = 45.77$, $SD = 6.07$), $F(1, 181) = 5.03$, $p < .05$. Parental solicitation, parental control, internalizing problems, and externalizing problems did not differ significantly by parents' gender ($p > .05$).

4.1. Testing the Model

The model based on parental reports had a good fit (see Figure 1) ($\chi^2/df = 1.52$, RMSEA=0.04, TLI = 0.98, CFI = 0.99, AGFI = 0.95, GFI = 0.98). All relationships in the model were significant ($p < .05$). The findings suggested that child disclosure ($\beta = 0.28$), parental solicitation ($\beta = .22$), and especially parental control ($\beta = 0.42$) predicted parental monitoring. Besides, parental monitoring positively affected internalizing problems ($\beta = 0.15$) and had a negative effect on externalizing problems ($\beta = -0.11$). In other words, parents reported that the more they monitored their children, the more internalizing problems but the less externalizing problems their children had. However, parents stated that children's internalizing problems ($\beta = 0.55$) directly affected externalizing problems. In this sense, it was observed that monitoring and parental monitoring sources (self-disclosure, parental solicitation, and parental control) indirectly affected problem behaviors. Similarly, monitoring indirectly affected external problems through internalizing problem behaviors. Table 5 shows the values for the paths in the model. When the table is examined, the C.R. value, a z-statistic, is greater than 1.96 for all variables. In other words, the paths in the model are significant, and the hypotheses are acceptable.

Table 5

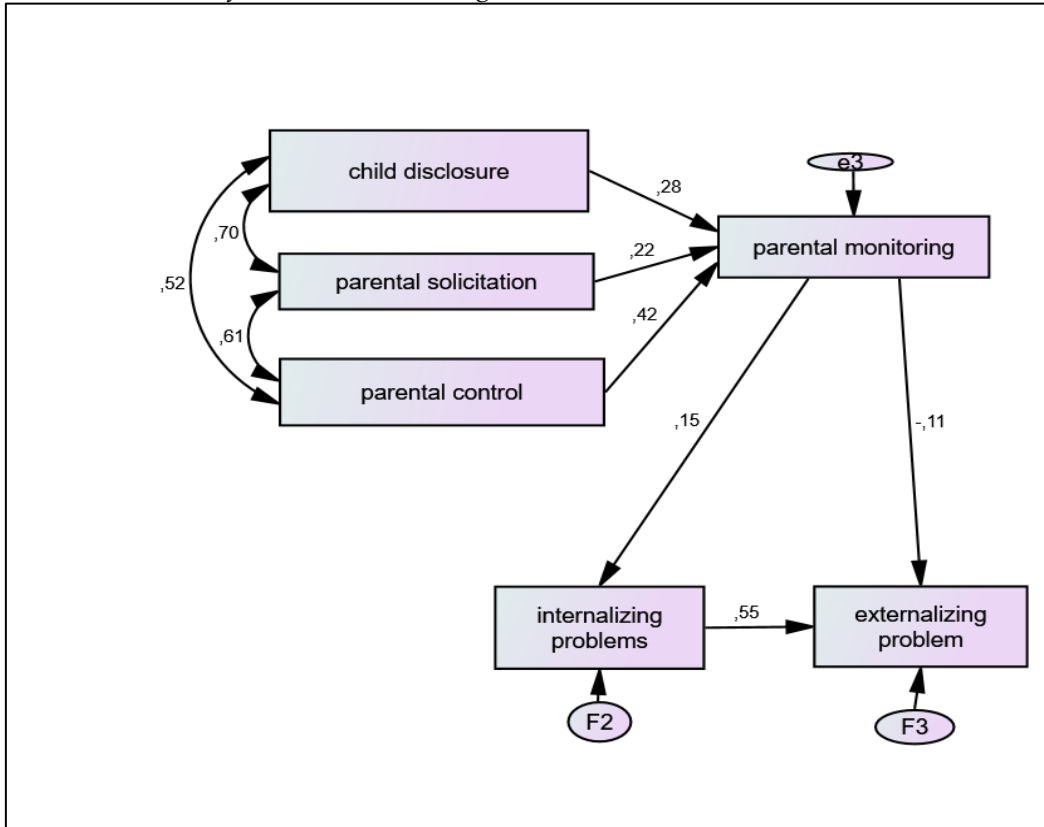
Standardized Path Coefficients for the Structural Model

Relationship	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	R ²	Critical Ratio (C.R.)	p
Parental Monitoring ← Self-Disclosure	.28	.62	4.43	**
Parental Monitoring ← Parental Solicitation	.22		3.15	**
Parental Monitoring ← Parental Control	.42		7.19	**
Internalizing Problem Behavior ← Parental Monitoring	.15	.02	2.08	.03
Externalizing Problem Behavior ← Parental Monitoring	-.11	.30	1.97	.04
Externalizing Problem Behavior ← Internalizing Problem Behavior	.55		8.80	**

Note. ** $p < .01$

To test significance of indirect effects in the structural model, we used 95% bias corrected confidence intervals based on 5000 bootstrap resamples. The findings demonstrated that monitoring indirectly affected external problems through internalizing problem behaviors ($\beta = -.02$, 95% CI $[-.04, -.01]$, $p < .05$). In other words internalizing problem behavior has a mediator role between monitoring and externalizing problem behaviors.

Figure 1

Structural Model of Parents' Monitoring and Problem Behaviours

5. Discussion

The present study examined the cross-sectional relationships between parental monitoring, its sources, and adolescents' internalizing and externalizing problems, and tested whether these variables differed by the gender of adolescents and parents, all based on parental reports. The main findings can be summarized as follows. With respect to adolescents' gender, the results indicated that child self-disclosure, parental monitoring, and internalizing problems differed significantly between girls and boys: parents reported that girls disclosed more, were monitored more closely, and showed higher internalizing problems than boys. With respect to parents' gender, mothers tended to report higher child self-disclosure and closer monitoring than fathers. Taken together, these patterns suggest that adolescents, and particularly girls, disclosed primarily to their mothers, who also reported monitoring them more closely. Although the present study focuses on parental monitoring rather than attachment, this pattern also points to the broader importance of parent-adolescent relational processes, since secure attachment to parents and perceived family support have been shown to be closely related to adolescents' perceived social support and well-being (Yıldız & Eldeleklioğlu, 2024). These findings are broadly consistent with previous research (Laird et al., 2010; Racz & McMahon, 2011). Studies likewise show that both boys and girls—especially girls—tend to disclose more to mothers (Crouter et al., 2005; Smetana & Metzger, 2008), and Keijsers and Poulin (2013) found that boys disclose less during middle adolescence due to privacy concerns, whereas girls increasingly disclose from early adolescence onward.

Problem behaviors also differed by gender, consistent with prior research. According to parental reports, internalizing problems were more common in girls. Similar gender differences in internalizing and externalizing problems appear in the literature. Externalizing problems are generally more prevalent in males, while internalizing problems are more frequent in females (Carragher et al., 2016; Crick & Zahn-Waxler, 2003). Aggression and disruptive behaviors tend to be higher in boys (Campos et al., 2014; Overbeek et al., 2006), whereas girls show higher rates of depression and anxiety (Hyde & Mezulis, 2020; Mathes et al., 2019). Similarly, in adolescents diagnosed with ADHD, gender predicted externalizing problems when other variables were controlled: males exhibited higher externalizing scores, whereas females showed more internalizing problems (Lau et al., 2021).

Another result was that child disclosure, parental solicitation, and parental control predicted parental monitoring according to parental reports. In this sense, parents gathered information primarily with parental control, then with child disclosure, and finally with parental solicitation. However, many studies reached different results, suggesting that child disclosure was the most critical determinant and primary source of parental information (Keijsers, Branje, VanderValk, et al., 2010; Kerr et al., 1999; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). However, Pettus (2006) stressed that parental solicitation was more related to parental information than adolescent disclosure or parental control. Additionally, parental solicitation in parental reports had a higher correlation with parental monitoring than parental control (Çetin, 2010; Kerr & Stattin, 2000). It might stem from cultural differences and variables such as the socioeconomic background. For example, some studies pointed out the association between parental warmth and control in Western cultures (Deater-Deckard et al., 2011).

The findings regarding the relationships between parental monitoring and adolescent problem behaviors were also of critical importance. According to the parental reports, monitoring affected internalizing and externalizing problems: parental monitoring was positively correlated with internalizing problems and negatively correlated with externalizing problems. In other words, as parental monitoring increased, internalizing problems increased, and externalizing problems decreased, which overlapped with the findings in the literature emphasizing the lack of monitoring as a risk factor for children to develop externalizing problems (Kreski et al., 2023; Manuele et al., 2023; Olson et al., 2023). Studies on parental monitoring often stress the relationships between parental judgments of what they know about adolescents' daily activities and adolescent adjustment and problem behaviors (Mann et al., 2015; Yang & Zhu, 2023). Studies have drawn attention to the relationship between higher levels of surveillance and lower levels of delinquency, regardless of adolescent or parent self-reports (Caldwell et al., 2006; Pettit et al., 2001). Upon consideration of the study's findings in conjunction with extant literature, it is posited that parental monitoring may exert a significant influence on the comprehension of problematic behaviors manifesting during adolescence.

We identified a relationship between parental monitoring and internalizing problems that diverges from studies reporting a negative association between these variables (Estreet et al., 2018; Geisner et al., 2018; Jun & Choi, 2013). However, consistent with research indicating that discipline, control-oriented monitoring, and high surveillance contribute to adolescents' internalizing symptoms (Gorostiaga et al., 2019; Yap et al., 2014), our findings suggest that monitoring in this context reflects parental control rather than supportive oversight. Studies emphasizing the protective role of parental monitoring highlight its contribution to effective parent-child communication and its buffering effect against internalizing problems (Bacchini et al., 2011). This interpretation is also compatible with research on children's social-emotional development showing that parents emphasize communication as a way of meeting children's social-emotional needs, whereas overly controlling parental attitudes may be problematic for children's emotional and behavioral adjustment (Gorostiaga et al., 2019; Isik & Sahin Taskin, 2024; Yap et al., 2014). In this study, parental monitoring varied by gender, with mothers reporting closer monitoring of daughters and perceiving them as having more internalizing problems, possibly due to gender norms or higher anxiety levels among females in Turkey. Cultural factors may also contribute, as

associations between monitoring and problem behaviors differ across socioeconomic (Stevens et al., 2007) and cultural groups (Smith & Krohn, 1995). Whether culture shapes internalizing/externalizing problems and parenting practices remains an important research focus (Rothenberg et al., 2020).

Another finding was that self-disclosure to parents, parental solicitation, and parental control indirectly affected problem behaviors through parental monitoring. In summary, the present findings indicate that self-disclosure to parents, parental solicitation, parental control, and parental monitoring have a positive effect on internalizing problems and a negative effect on externalizing problems. Despite the absence of a supportive finding in the extant literature, monitoring through child disclosure has been associated with low delinquency (Kerr et al., 2010). The correlation between delinquency and self-disclosure exhibited a more robust association compared to its links with parental control or parental solicitation (Keijsers et al., 2009). Conversely, when personality traits were controlled for, such as well-being, stress response, harm avoidance, alienation, and aggression, parental solicitation, control, and self-disclosure did not predict delinquency in adolescents (Eaton et al., 2009). Concurrently, the findings of Keijsers, Branje, VanderValk, et al. (2010) indicated that parental solicitation and control did not serve as effective predictors of adolescent guilt. Conversely, adolescents exhibiting problem behaviors tend to conceal their actions more frequently and exhibit reduced communication with their parents. A negative relationship was identified between involvement in criminal activity and parental solicitation and control. Adolescents exhibiting problem behaviors are likely to engage in secrecy towards their parents (Darling & Tilton-Weaver, 2019).

As indicated by another finding regarding problem behaviors, parents believed that as internalizing problems increased, externalizing problems concomitantly increased as well. In other words, internalizing problems predicted externalizing problems, a finding that is supported by the extant literature suggesting the simultaneous occurrence of internalizing and externalizing problems in adolescents (Nivard et al., 2017; Overbeek et al., 2006). Studies indicate that the co-occurrence of externalizing and internalizing problem behaviors is common in adolescents (Ma et al., 2025; Willner et al., 2016). Despite the prevalence of comorbidity (Angold et al., 1999), the underlying mechanisms associated with the nature and etiology of comorbidity remain to be fully elucidated (Lee & Bukowski, 2012). The findings regarding the comorbidity of internalizing and externalizing problems indicated a positive relationship between internalizing problems and externalizing problems, which is consistent with the present findings (Perle et al., 2013; Vieno et al., 2008). Conversely, some researchers have indicated that internalizing problems have been found to be negatively associated with externalizing problems (Fanti et al., 2008; Van der Ende et al., 2016). Consequently, adolescents with internalizing problems exhibited a reduced incidence of externalizing problems over time. This phenomenon can be attributed to the occurrence of internalizing problems, which led to social withdrawal and fatigue, thereby hindering the development of externalizing problems (Kerr et al., 1997; Leadbeater et al., 1999). As posited by Masten et al. (2005), internalizing problems was found to be a predictor of a relative decrease in externalizing problems during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. A study based on parental reports revealed that internalizing and externalizing problems in childhood were interrelated, especially depending on the severity of the problems. However, in the absence of severity consideration, externalizing problems were not found to be associated with internalizing problems (Stone et al., 2015). In summary, the necessity for longitudinal studies is evident in order to elucidate the nature of the relationship between internalizing and externalizing problems.

The findings of the present study offer several significant practical implications. A comparison of maternal and paternal monitoring revealed discrepancies in the strategies employed, with mothers reporting higher levels of child disclosure and more frequent monitoring than fathers. A salient finding is that parental control emerged as the strongest predictor of parental knowledge. This finding contradicts previous research and may be indicative of cultural differences. In addition, the findings indicated that parental monitoring exhibited a negative correlation with externalizing problems and a positive correlation with internalizing problems. According to

reports from parents, internalizing problems have been shown to predict subsequent externalizing problems. These findings underscore the necessity for additional research to be conducted on the effects of parental monitoring on both internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Furthermore, longitudinal studies are required to enhance our comprehension of the nature of the relationship between these problem domains. The results of the study underscore the significance of parenting practices as a pivotal domain for intervention.

6. Recommendations

In light of the findings, experts are able to develop parenting training programs and conduct studies to provide information on the nature of parental monitoring and the role of gender in monitoring children. Experts can also organize seminars and training sessions to help parents understand the role of parenting practices in addressing the nature of problem behaviors during adolescence. Collaboration with educational institutions can facilitate access to parents, and school counselors can carry out various activities aimed at raising awareness and strengthening parenting skills. Furthermore, the implementation of in-service training programs may be considered to enhance awareness of the subject among other health professionals, including psychologists and social workers, within their respective disciplines. The planning of interdisciplinary studies can also be undertaken. Subsequent studies may be conducted to ascertain which aspects of parenting should be prioritized, particularly in light of our findings that parental monitoring increases internalizing problems while reducing externalizing problems. Consequently, the development of preventive interventions should be informed by these findings.

7. Limitations and Future Directions

The current study has several limitations. The most significant is the limited number of participating mothers and fathers, particularly fathers, whose low participation resulted from difficulties in reaching parents, reluctance to participate, and challenges in responding to the survey. A larger sample could have offered a more detailed understanding of the relationship between parental monitoring and problem behaviors; thus, the findings are restricted to the study participants. Another limitation is the reliance solely on parental reports and the cross-sectional design. Because parents and adolescents may differ in their perceptions, the associations between parental monitoring and problem behaviors may vary from adolescents' perspectives. Furthermore, maternal and paternal reports were treated collectively, preventing comparisons between mothers and fathers when examining the relationships between parental monitoring and problem behaviors. The sample, drawn from a single province, also limits the generalizability of the findings.

Given these methodological constraints, future research should incorporate adolescent data and analyze parent and adolescent reports together. Studies with broader and more diverse samples across multiple regions of Turkey would yield a more comprehensive understanding of parenting, and using multiple data sources would further strengthen the literature. The findings of this study may inform practitioners designing interventions addressing adolescent problem behaviors, and programs focusing on parental monitoring during adolescence are recommended. Future research may also adopt mixed-methods designs combining qualitative and quantitative approaches or employ longitudinal methods to explore parental monitoring and its links to problem behaviors over time, considering age, generational, and temporal factors. Collecting data from adolescents and parents within the same families, studying different age groups and socioeconomic strata, and incorporating qualitative methods would address the limitations of this study. Additionally, research examining cultural aspects of parental monitoring and comparing its effects in clinical versus normative samples would be valuable.

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Data availability: The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are fully presented within this article. Additional data supporting the study's conclusions can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies: Language checking was performed using OpenAI's ChatGPT 4.0 and DeepLy to improve the quality of the linguistic expression. AI support has been used to make the resources compliant with APA 7. All content checked using AI was reviewed and edited by the authors to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Declaration of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethics declaration: Ethical approval for this research was granted by the Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University Ethics Committee (approval date and reference number: 10.05.2017/55), and written consent to conduct the study was obtained. The data were collected from parents during home-visit interviews. An informed consent form was prepared for the participant parents, and they were informed about the study and that they could withdraw at any time.

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