

Chapter # 18

THE RESEARCH ON MOTHERS' OPINIONS ABOUT SCHOOL READINESS OF THEIR 66-72 MONTH-OLD CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

The present research was aimed at studying mothers' opinions about school readiness of their 66-72 month old children receiving and not receiving pre-school education. The scope of the research consists of mothers from Konya -Turkey whose children receive pre-school education and do not receive any pre-school education. The sample of the research consists of 120 mothers in total- that is, 60 mothers having 66-72 months of children that receive preschool education and 60 mothers whose children do not receive preschool education. "Mother's View of Child's School Readiness Scale" was employed as data collection tool. It was found that there was a significant difference between mothers' opinions about school readiness of children and the condition of receiving-not receiving preschool education in terms of readiness from mother's viewpoint, intellectual-linguistic development, social-emotional development, physical development and the general total points. The same difference was not observed in the self-care skills.

Keywords: mother's opinion, child, pre-school education, school readiness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mention is made of the family in the life of children but it has to be divided into mother and father. Generally, mothers bear a different kind of responsibility from fathers in children's lives. For a child, the father is seen rather as a playmate but the mother is the person who meets the child's almost all needs (Kotil, 2005). Father and mother are important in the early years of life but when the children reach age 3 or 4, their interest in friends as well as in the family members increases. However, father, mother and the family environment are still important for children. Children aged six or seven are now faced with the task of entering into a new environment where they will spend a large part of their lives and they have to adjust to this environment. This new environment is the primary education institution (Kılıc, 2008).

Starting school is one of the turning points in a child's life (Polat-Unutkan, 2007b). Therefore, the child's introduction into school life requires a period of preparation (Cakmak & Yılmaz, 2009).

Once they start school, children are faced with the question of adapting to a new environment different from home and family life and they have to endear themselves and get approved by their teachers and friends in this different environment (Polat-Unutkan, 2007b). In this process, the mutual interaction between parents and the child has a key effect on the child's development. The process of adjustment involves a new experience not only for the children but also for the family. Children begin school with an inventory of experiences, habits and skills which they have so far acquired through their interactions with their families and immediate surroundings. Factors such as sending children to an educational institution in the pre-school phase, reading books to them from early developmental ages on, taking them to the theatre, the cinema, concerts, art exhibitions and museums and discussing what has been seen with them are significant opportunities offered to children in terms of pre-school education. Attitudes of parents towards child rearing and their treatment of children influence children's intellectual, cognitive, emotional and social development. This is a point specifically emphasized by social learning theorists and theorists of psychoanalysis (Erbay, 2008; Inal, 2012; Lokumcu-Tozar, 2011; Ulku, 2007).

One of the goals of pre-school education in Turkey is to prepare children for the programmed education which they will later attend. Not only had those receiving pre-school education but also those at home need to acquire the skills required to be successful at primary education. Both pre-school education and family have a significant role in the acquisition of these proficiencies (Dinc, 2012; Oktay, 2010).

In the new environment, children are for the first time faced with tasks such as participating in planned and programmed educational activities and learning to read- and write, which is the most important task in primary education, and acquiring basic arithmetic skills. In order to be able to meet the expectations of this new social environment and adjust to this new environment, children need to have a certain level of readiness (Erkan, 2011).

The concept of readiness has been used differently in the literature. The concept was for long used in conjunction with reading-writing or starting school. Today, it is generally used in the meaning of being ready (Oktay, 2010). Students in the first grade of Primary education have defined school readiness as attaining maturity required by the first grade of primary education and they pointed out that this maturity depends on parallel development of children's social, emotional, mental and physical developmental areas (Kocyyigit & Saban, 2014).

Readiness involves the features that an individual already possesses in a new learning situation. In addition to the age and the development of school age children, their attitude and motivation towards school determine the level of their readiness for school (Aydın, 2009).

Readiness, which is a larger concept than maturation, assumes an individual should possess the necessary preliminary information, skills and attitudes required to perform a task. Thus, readiness covers both the concept of maturation and the preliminary qualifications needed for the task (Kılıç, 2008).

As can be understood from all these definitions, the level of readiness to school, which may vary from one child to another, is a concept that involves a child's maturation in all areas of development in a balanced way together with a significant substructure and has a performance that allows demonstration of all characteristics (Lokumcu-Tozar, 2011).

There is no consensus in Turkey as to with what skills and proficiencies (competences) children should start primary education with. Irrespective of whether or not they have received pre-school education as well as their individual differences, children over 72 months are introduced into primary education. Which of the children that have started school possess the maturity for school is known by neither their parents nor their pre-school teachers. While some children are ready for school in terms of their intellectual development, they may not be so emotionally ready. Starting primary school will be a tough and stressful job for these children. Whereas some children manage this transition easily, others need support in this regard. A harmonious and smooth transition from home to primary education is made possible by possessing a degree of school-ready maturity. Therefore, questioning what skills and proficiencies the phenomenon of readiness to school is composed of is of huge significance (Kocyigit & Saban, 2014). Polat-Unutkan (2006) cited physical, mental, emotional and social and environmental factors among the major factors affecting readiness to primary education.

Assessing whether children are ready for primary education or not varies in different countries depending on different views (Esaspehlivan, 2006). Children are equipped with necessary qualifications for school readiness and as a natural result of this some inequalities are eliminated, thereby increasing their school achievement. In Turkey, on the other hand, "chronological age" is regarded as the fundamental criterion to start primary school and therefore children's shortcomings and aspects that need to be supported cannot be identified. A child's readiness to meeting the requirements of school and especially to reading and writing is a multi-faceted and complex phenomenon. Here, both children's individual development and abilities and the impressions they receive from their environment, that is, what they have learned before have a huge effect. Studies indicate that pre-school experiences have an important role in whether or not the children in the early years of primary education will be successful and happy (Kılıc, 2008; Yapıcı & Ulu, 2010). Trying to teach something to children who are not ready to learn it will not only lead to inefficiency but at the same time to failure, disappointment and humiliation in children (Erkan & Kırca, 2010; Lokumcu-Tozar, 2011).

As a result of parental observations and studies conducted in Turkey, one of the important factors in children's transition from pre-school education to primary education seems to be the social factor but in fact this is "family" (Ulku, 2007). The most important task in proper development of children in this period belongs to parents. In order for parents to perform this task, they need to develop positive attitudes towards child rearing (Erbay, 2008).

Studies conducted emphasize that views of the family or the teacher significantly affect the ways of rearing children and educational practices. Although there are some who argue that leaving the decision about a child's starting school to parents is inadvisable, (Kutluca-Canbulat & Yıldızbas, 2014), there are also others who suggest that not having a common vision about readiness to school on the part of adults who are involved in children's education will affect children's skills, attitudes and behaviors (Retold by Ozen-Altinkaynak & Akman, 2013).

Based on the views of mothers evaluating school readiness skills of children of mothers whose children receive and cannot receive preschool education opportunities appears as a significant issue that must be researched. The present research aimed at studying opinions of mothers on school readiness of their 66-72-month-old children that received and did not receive pre-school education.

2. METHOD

2.1.Scope and Sample

The scope of the research, which has a screening model in causal-comparative research design, includes mothers having 66-72-month-old children that receive and do not receive preschool education in the province of Konya-Turkey. The sample of the research consists of 120 mothers- that is, 60 mothers having 66-72 months of children that receive preschool education and 60 mothers whose children do not receive preschool education. In the study group, 71 mothers (59.2%) are primary school graduates, 32 mothers (26.7%) graduated from secondary education institutions and 17 mothers (14.2%) have bachelor's degree. 75 participant mothers (62,5%) are housewives, 13 participant mothers (10.8%) are officials, 13 participant mothers (10.8%) are tradeswomen, 19 participant mothers (15.8%) have other occupations. Fifty-five of mothers (45.8%) have daughters and sixty-five of mothers (54.2%) have sons.

2.2. Data Collection

In the research, personal information form developed by the researchers was conducted on parents of children in order to obtain the information related to the parents, and 'Mother's View of Child's School Readiness Scale (MVCSRS) 'developed by Kotil (2005) was employed to evaluate mothers' opinions about children's readiness for primary school and development. Mother's Views of Child's School Readiness Scale consists of five dimensions including readiness from mother's viewpoint (20 items), intellectual and linguistic development (29 items), social emotional development (12 items), physical development (21 items), self-care skills (12 items), and 94 items in total. The scale is based on information that mother can observe at home. According to replication frequency, the behaviours of children are graded by mother as never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), always (5). The Cronbach Alpha value of the scale is .95.

2.3. Data Analysis

The perceptions of mothers about school readiness levels of their children depending on the condition of receiving-not receiving preschool education were analysed through "Independent T-test".

3. FINDINGS

In the study, in order to determine the mothers' perception of their children's levels of readiness to school depending on children's receiving-not receiving pre-school education, "Scale for The Child's Readiness to School According to Mother" was administered to the mothers. Table 1 shows independent t-test results conducted for total and sub-scale points of children's readiness to school scale according to mothers depending on the variable of receiving and not-receiving pre-school education.

Table 1. Results of Dependent T-Test Conducted for Total and Sub-Scale Points of Mother's Views of Child's School Readiness Scale Depending on Receiving-Not Receiving Preschool Education.

	The Condition of Receiving Preschool Education	n	\bar{X}	S	sd	t	p
Readiness from Mother's Viewpoint	Receiving Preschool Education	60	96,10	8,67	118	4,30	,000
	Not Receiving Preschool Education	60	88,78	9,88			
Intellectual-Linguistic Development	Receiving Preschool Education	60	137,30	9,58	118	4,73	,000
	Not Receiving Preschool Education	60	126,53	14,76			
Social-Emotional Development	Receiving Preschool Education	60	55,43	5,22	118	2,39	,018
	Not Receiving Preschool Education	60	52,88	6,38			
Physical Development	Receiving Preschool Education	60	100,55	9,87	118	4,93	,000
	Not Receiving Preschool Education	60	91,28	10,67			
Self Care Skills	Receiving Preschool Education	60	56,88	5,69	118	1,33	,186
	Not Receiving Preschool Education	60	55,55	5,26			
General Total	Receiving Preschool Education	60	446,26	29,56	118	4,87	,000
	Not Receiving Preschool Education	60	415,03	39,80			

When the t test results in Table 1 are examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference below the level of 0.05 for children receiving preschool education between mothers' opinions about school readiness of children and the condition of receiving-not receiving preschool education in terms of readiness from mother's viewpoint, intellectual-linguistic development, social-emotional development, physical development and the general total points. The same degree of significance in the difference was not observed for the self-care skills.

The results of the t test given in Table 1 show that in the readiness dimension from the mothers' points of view, the mean score of mothers whose children have received pre-school education is (\bar{X} =96.10) whereas the mean score of mothers whose children have not received pre-school education is (\bar{X} =88.78). In the mental-linguistic dimension, the mean score of mothers whose children have received pre-school education is (\bar{X} =137.30) while the mean score of mothers whose children have not received pre-school education is (\bar{X} =126.53). In the social-affective development, the mean score of mothers whose children have received pre-school education is (\bar{X} =55.43) whereas the mean score of mothers whose children have not received pre-school education is (\bar{X} =52.88).

In the physical education, the mean score of the mothers whose children have received pre-school education is (\bar{X} =100.55) while the mean score of mothers whose children have not received pre-school education is (\bar{X} =91.28). In the self-care skills, the mean score of mothers whose children have received pre-school education is (\bar{X} =56.88) whereas the mean score of mothers whose children have not received pre-school education is (\bar{X} =55.55). In terms of the general total scores, the mean score of mothers whose children have received pre-school education is (\bar{X} =446.26) while the mean score of mothers whose children have not received pre-school education is (\bar{X} =415.03). According to these results obtained from the study, a significant difference was identified in favor of mothers whose children have received pre-school education at a significance level of 0.05 between children's readiness to school from their mothers' view and whether or not children have received pre-school education in terms of readiness from the mothers' points of view, mental-linguistic development, social-affective development, physical development and the general total scores except for the self-care skills.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings from the research showed that there is a considerable difference on behalf of children receiving preschool education between maternal opinions about school readiness of children and the condition of receiving-not receiving preschool education in terms of readiness from mother's viewpoint, intellectual-linguistic development, social-emotional development, physical development and the general total points. The same difference was not observed in self-care skills. Mothers whose children receive preschool education opportunities find their children more adequate in terms of school readiness skills.

Karataş (2009) describes the effect of preschool education on the child development as; socialization, ability of self-expression, support for cognitive development, academic learning, decrease in the rate of grade retention and dropping out, improvement in nutrition and health of children, better social emotional behavior development, more positive parent-child relationship, being self-sufficient individuals in adulthood and being individuals having high economic earning potential in future. In the study conducted by Senemoglu (1994), it is indicated that preschool education provides children with self knowledge of all features and self-acceptance, awareness of their own cultural aspects and other cultures' aspects, impressive communication via language, music, dance, drawing, and it contributes to skills such as multiple thinking and problem solving and creativity.

Receiving pre-school education makes a significant difference in terms of children's readiness to school (Erkan, 2011; Erkan & Kirca, 2010; Esaspehlivan, 2006; Lokumcu-Tozar, 2011). There is a significant correlation between the variable of receiving pre-school education and children's mathematics skills (Polat-Unutkan, 2007a). Moreover, it was found that listening, speaking, reading, dictation and writing skills of children who have received pre-school education are higher than those of children who have not received pre-school education (Ozcan, 2014; Topcu, 2012). In addition, it was seen that receiving pre-school education positively affected children's social skills (Erbay, 2008; Yener, 2014) and academic achievements (Ozkesemez, 2008).

According to a study conducted by Cakmak & Yilmaz (2009), families played the role of creating a reading circle for children and acting as a guide in ensuring children's readiness to school. It can be said that pre-school education is effective in terms of readiness to primary school and in this sense pre-school education program has served its purpose (Yazar, 2013).

Mothers are regarded as the first teacher of their children within the first three years of children's life. Especially mother's level of education is a factor that might influence the communication she establishes with the child. As the mother's level of education increases, so does her perception of the child as being ready to school. A significant correlation was observed between children's readiness levels to school and mothers' views about their children's readiness levels to school (Kotil, 2005).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the research results showed that there is a considerable difference between mothers' opinions on school readiness of children and the condition of receiving-not receiving preschool education in terms of readiness from mother's viewpoint, intellectual-linguistic development, social-emotional development, physical development and the general total points. Consequently, future studies can be done in order to demonstrate the importance of preschool education and its effects on developmental stages of children, especially school readiness skills.

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