PARENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES FROM PARENTS' POINT OF VIEW

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ABSTRACT

In this study aimed at the analysis of parent involvement activities applied in preschool institutions from the parents' point of view. The population of the study consists of parents whose 5-6 year old children were attending to a preschool institution in two cities of Turkey. Randomly selected two hundred and forty parents from middle socio-economic status whose children were attending to a preschool institution comprised the sample of the study. The data of the study were gathered through a questionnaire. In the analysis of the data obtained the views of parents over parent involvement changed depending on parents' ages, education status and their profession were analyzed through Kruskall-Wallis test. A significant difference was found out amongst the parents' level of involvement, their educational level and their occupations.

Key words: Parent education, preschool education, parent involvement activities

1. INTRODUCTION

In the preschool period, children acquire many behaviors and habits throughout their upbringing and development by means of their parents, who form the closest environment for them. Their development has been supported by formal education when they start school. At this point, parents have a major role. The contribution of preschool education to children is directly proportionate to how much parents are involved in the process. Thus, parents are of importance as they make this period more meaningful for children (Deniz-Kan, 2008; Yazar et al., 2008; Tezel-Şahin & Özbey, 2007; Çelenk, 2003).

In addition to the instruction given to children, preschool education also involves guidance for parents regarding child education (Atabey & Tezel-Şahin, 2009). For educators, knowing parents and providing them with guidance when necessary is as important as knowing the child (Tezel-Şahin & Özbey, 2009). Parent involvement enables the institution to maintain its educational duties efficiently. School becomes more qualitative in achieving its educational goals. Children do not regard school isolated from parents, and gain self-confidence. Furthermore, they are emotionally satisfied. Through parent involvement activities, children have the opportunity to know other parents and communicate with them. These activities also enable the teacher to know the parents more closely, and to take the initiative to assist children when needed. Parent involvement activities guide the teacher while developing the curriculum as well (Yazar et al., 2008).

Parent involvement activities are important for children as they form a basis for the academic achievement in later years. Through such activities, both the assistance that children need is provided within parent-school involvement, and skills and abilities of parents regarding child education are enhanced (Gürşimşek et al., 2007). The most fundamental contribution of parent involvement is that it enables parents to stake a claim on children's rights, which increases their awareness to espouse their children both at school and home. Parent involvement activities reinforce parents to play a major role to make changes in the society, particularly in their children (Blackwall, 2008).

Parent involvement can also be defined as the investment that parents make in their children. Although parent involvement is regarded as important, there may be some misunderstandings regarding its extent. Parents may tend to perceive parent involvement as merely helping their children do their homework. However, parents can actively participate in the educational activities maintained in school. They can observe children, support the teacher, and take part in school's decision-making process (Carlisle et al., 2005). In parent involvement, parents also perform their skills. In addition to this, they contribute to the interaction between the child and his/her peers as well as maintaining their parental duties by supporting social and emotional development of their children (Yazar et al., 2008).

Research into parent involvement programs has revealed different results. In an attempt to determine parents' involvement in preschool education, Deniz Kan (2008) found that parents do not sufficiently participate in parent involvement activities. In a study to compare and contrast the beliefs of teachers and parents regarding parent involvement, Ünüvar (2010) found that parent involvement programs are not conducted as desired. Batur Musaoğlu (2008) put forward that of all the parent involvement activities, in-class activities are those in which parents participate most. The findings of the research have also shown that parents make craft toys with their children, and play with it altogether; they buy a book for them at least once in a month; and send educational tools and materials to school. Fantuzzo, Mcwayne, Perry and Childs (2004) have pointed out that home-based parent involvement activities have a positive impact on children regarding motivation, attention, sense of mission, linguistic abilities and orientation problems. The success of the preschool education programs, which aim to develop

sophisticated children, depends upon taking them into account as a whole with their family, not as a separate individual, and reckoning parents as the partner of the educational institution. Thanks to the positive relationship between school and parents, education and instruction have been achieved at the targeted level. Based on this premise, the present study aims to evaluate parent involvement programs in preschool institutions.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is descriptive in nature as it puts forward parents' point of view regarding their participation in the parent involvement activities (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008).

2.1. Population and Sample

The population for the research is comprised of the parents of children belonging to 5-6 age group attending preschool institutions in Ankara and Afyonkarahisar in Turkey. Through simple random sampling, 240 parents with middle socio-economic status were selected as the sample for the research.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

Data were collected through a two-part questionnaire designed by the researchers. In the questionnaire is personal information about parents as well as their opinions about the benefits of parent involvement programs, parent involvement activities in the preschools that their children attend, and factors determining their participation in these activities.

2.3. Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data gathered from the research, personal information about parents were analyzed through percentage and frequency values; and whether parents' opinions regarding parent involvement change depending on their age, education level and occupation is identified utilizing Kruskall-Wallis Test (Büyüköztürk, 2009). The level of significance is determined as 0.05. $p<0.05$ refers to statistical significance whereas $p>0.05$ shows the results are not statistically significant.

3. FINDINGS

55% of the mothers involved in the sample were aged between 21- 30 whereas 56% of the fathers were aged between 31- 40. 46% of the mothers and 53% of the fathers were university graduates. The ratio of the mothers who were not working was 45,8% whereas 36,3% of the fathers were self-employed.

Table 1. Parents' Opinions about the Benefits of Parent Involvement Programs and the Adequacy of Parent Involvement Activities

Opinions about Parent Involvement Programs	*Yes*		*Partially*		*No*		*Total*	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Parent involvement programs contribute to the child's development	190	79,2	46	19,2	4	1,7	240	100.0
Parent involvement programs contribute to parents	165	68,8	63	26,3	12	5,0	240	100.0
Parent involvement programs are adequate in aforementioned preschool institutions	145	60,4	72	30,0	23	9,6	240	100.0

When Table 1 is analyzed, it can be seen that 79,2% of the parents thought that parent involvement programs contribute to the child's development. 68,8% of the parents believed that parent involvement programs contribute to parents themselves whereas 60,4% of them found parent involvement programs carried out in aforementioned preschool institutions adequate.

Table 2. Parents' Opinions about the Factors Determining Their Participation in Parent Involvement Programs

Factors Impediment to Parent Involvement Programs		*n*	*%*
Lack of time	No	143	59,6
	Yes	97	40,4
	Total	240	100,0
Lack of adequate activities	No	196	81,7
	Yes	44	18,3
	Total	240	100,0

As seen on Table 2, 40,4% of the parents believed that there is not enough time to carry out parent involvement activities whereas 18,3% thought that activities employed in parent involvement programs are inadequate, which is an impediment to parent involvement programs.

Table 3. The Results of Kruskal Wallis Test Determining the Effect of Age on Parents' Participation in Parent Involvement Programs

	Participation in Parent Involvement Programs							*Kruskall-Wallis H*	
Age (Mother)	*n*	*Mean*	*Median*	*Min*	*Max*	*SD*	*Mid-Rank*	*Chi-Square*	*p*
21-30 yrs.	131	13,3	13,0	3,0	24,0	3,7	122,1	0,147	0,929
31-40 yrs.	104	13,0	13,0	2,0	23,0	4,3	118,7		
41-50 yrs.	5	12,4	15,0	6,0	19,0	5,6	117,4		
Age (Father)	*n*	*Mean*	*Median*	*Min*	*Max*	*SD*	*Mid-Rank*	*Chi-Square*	*p*
21-30 yrs.	80	13,0	13,0	3,0	24,0	4,1	113,3	0,792	0,672
31-40 yrs.	134	13,3	13,0	4,0	23,0	4,1	117,1		
41-50 yrs.	26	12,2	13,0	2,0	17,0	3,6	104,7		

Table 3 displays that there was not a statistically significant relationship (p>0.005) between parents' age and their participation in parent involvement programs carried out in preschools.

Table 4. The Results of Kruskal Wallis Test Determining the Effect of Education Level on Parents' Participation in Parent Involvement Programs

Education Level (Mother)	***Parents' Participation in Parent Involvement Programs***							***Kruskall-Wallis H***		
	n	*Mean*	*Median*	*Min*	*Max*	*SD*	*Mid-Rank*	*Chi-Square*	*p*	*Bilateral Comparisons*
Primary	13	10,8	11,0	3,0	24,0	6,1	82,1	9,082	0,028*	1-2 1-3 1-4
High school	103	12,9	13,0	5,0	22,0	3,5	114,0			
University	110	13,4	14,0	2,0	23,0	4,1	126,9			
Post-graduate	14	14,9	17,0	6,0	19,0	4,1	153,8			
Education Level (Father)	*n*	*Mean*	*Median*	*Min*	*Max*	*SD*	*Mid-Rank*	*Chi-Square*	*p*	*Bilateral Comparisons*
Primary	6	1,4	1,0	0,0	3,0	1,3	107,5	25,18	0,001*	1-4 2-4 3-4
High school	76	1,9	1,0	0,0	13,0	2,0	123,2			
University	128	1,9	1,0	0,0	13,0	2,3	116,9			
Post-graduate	30	2,6	2,0	0,0	13,0	3,1	141,0			

*p<0.005

Table 4 shows that there was a statistically significant relationship (p<0.005) between the education level and parents' participation in parent involvement programs. As seen, mothers (x^2=9,082) and fathers (x^2=25,18) with a post-graduate degree participated more in parent involvement programs.

Table 5. The Results of Kruskal Wallis Test Determining the Effect of Occupation on Parents' Participation in Parent Involvement Programs

Occupation (Mother)	***Parents' Participation in Parent Involvement Programs***							***Kruskall-Wallis H***		
	n	*Mean*	*Median*	*Min*	*Max*	*SD*	*Mid-Rank*	*Chi-Square*	*p*	*Bilateral Comparisons*
Unemployed	110	12,7	13,0	3,0	24,0	3,8	111,4	13,63	0,008*	4-1 4-2 4-3 4-5
Civil servant	49	12,2	13,0	2,0	20,0	3,9	106,1			
Worker	7	11,9	14,0	6,0	15,0	4,1	107,3			
Self-employed	11	14,2	15,0	8,0	22,0	4,3	136,8			
Learned profession (doctor, lawyer, engineer, architect etc.)	63	14,6	15,0	4,0	23,0	4,1	146,3			
Occupation (Father)	*n*	*Mean*	*Median*	*Min*	*Max*	*SD*	*Mid-Rank*	*Chi-Square*	*p*	*Bilateral Comparisons*
Civil servant	51	12,0	12,0	2,0	21,0	3,9	99,7	15,75	0,001*	4-1 4-2 4-3
Worker	33	11,7	12,0	5,0	16,0	3,1	93,0			
Self-employed	87	13,4	13,0	4,0	22,0	3,7	120,3			
Learned profession (doctor, lawyer, engineer, architect etc.)	69	14,4	15,0	4,0	24,0	4,4	140,6			

*p<0.005

As depicted on Table 5, there was a statistically significant relationship (p<0.005) between parents' occupation and their participation in parent involvement programs. It was found that mothers (x^2=13,63, p<0.005) and fathers (x^2=15,75, p<0.005) with a learned profession (doctor, lawyer, engineer, architect) participate more in parent involvement programs.

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, which aims to evaluate parents' point of view and parent involvement programs in preschools, it was revealed that 79,2% of the parents involved in the sample believed that parents involvement programs are beneficial for their children while 68,8% of them thought they are beneficial for themselves. Effective parent involvement programs reinforce children's cognitive development, language skills, academic achievement and school performance (Izzo et al., 1999; Fan & Chen, 2001; Diffily, 2004; Yamamoto et al., 2006; Eliason & Jenkins, 2008). As parent involvement increases, children have better rapport with their teachers and parents; they develop positive attitudes towards school; and have high self-esteem (Pehlivan, 2001; Cordy & Wilson, 2004; Machen et al., 2005).

A great body of research depict that parents who cooperate with school are actively involved in the learning process expanding their knowledge in child development and education. (Marcon, 1999; Arabacı, 2003; Diffily, 2004; Gürşimşek et al., 2007; Eliason & Jenkins, 2008; Tezel-Şahin & Özyürek, 2010). Effective parent involvement programs have a positive impact on both children and parents. Findings of the current research put forward that a majority of parents believed parent involvement programs are useful for both children and parents.

The present study set forth that 60,4% of the parents found the parent involvement programs held in aforementioned preschools adequate. However, Deniz Kan (2008) pointed out that parents do not participate in parent involvement activities adequately. Ünüvar (2010) has also found that parent involvement programs are not maintained as planned. When factors that set impediment to parents' participation in parent involvement programs are closely examined in the present study, it could be found that 40.4% of the parents have difficulty in participating in such programs as they cannot allocate time to do it. Parents who work full-time do not have time for parent

involvement (Moles, 1993; Baker & Jodie, 1997; Pehlivan, 2001; Tezel-Şahin & Ünver, 2005; Tezel-Şahin & Özyürek, 2010). According to Becker Klein (1999), in the contemporary society, parents have to allocate more time to work particularly during school hours, which abates their active involvement in the education process of their children.

A statistically significant relationship ($p<0.05$) was found between parents' participation in parent involvement programs, and their education level and occupation. Parents who were post-graduates, and had a learned profession (doctor, lawyer, engineer, and architect) participated more in such programs. Much of the research in this area has put forward that parents' education level determine their participation in parent involvement programs (Davies, 1993; Baker & Jodie, 1997; Raffaele & Knoff, 1999; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Castro et al., 2004, Waanders et al., 2007). Low expectations and lack of interest of parents with a low level of education bring about lack of knowledge in child education and this may cause such parents to remain reserved, thus hinder their participation in such programs (Tezel-Şahin & Özyürek, 2010). According to Dauber and Epstein (1989), as level of education gets higher, parents participate in parent involvement programs more efficiently (In Baker & Jodie, 1997). Fantuzzo, Tighe and Childs (2000) claim that parents with a high level of education are more involved in such programs as compared to those with a low level of education. The findings of the present research are parallel to those of Fantuzzo, Tighe and Childs as well as other researchers in the field.

Parent involvement is crucial as it enables preschool education programs to reach success. Parent involvement ensures continuity, which purport what has been learned at school is carried home. It further enables parents become aware of their roles regarding child development and education as well as reinforcing the development of children in all domains. Not only does it enrich home environment but also it prepares children for primary education by eliminating environmental differences children may bring. From the preschool period onwards, therefore, it is necessary to evaluate parents' beliefs about parent involvement programs; figure out how frequent they participate in such activities; and identify the factors that determine their participation, which altogether enables parent involvement programs to achieve specified goals.

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