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Examining the Impact of Pre-School Education on Self-Concept

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relation between third grade students' self-concepts who attend the pre-school education and who do not. The sample of the study consists of 560 third grade students from 13 separate public secondary schools in Ankara. In order to determine self-concept level of students, both Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and a Personal Information Form which was developed by the researcher to gain demographic information about the students who attended in this research were used. The results of this study can be summarized as follows; Pre-school education positively affects the self-concept of students who attend this education.

Keywords: Importance of Preschool Education. Development, Self-concept

Introduction

Early childhood period has a critical role in the lives of individuals (Black et.al, 1995). During this period, all the material and spiritual opportunities of school life, especially parents' opportunities, provide a positive contribution to a child's development. Besides the psychological, social and cultural opportunities that came into service of child allow informed and educated individuals to grow (Karavasilis et al., 2003). Preschool education provides multiple supports to child's different competence fields from childhood period and also leave an important trace on individual's life with gained domestic experiences (Avci, 1995).

For child, school constitutes the most important social environment following family life (Calhoun, 2001). Preschool education, which is the first step of school education, supports the child's development mentally, emotionally, socially and physically (Aral et al., 2000). At the preschool period, development covers a very fast and critical process. There is a mutual interaction between all development and competence fields of individual (Deckard, 2000). During this period, negativity or neglect in any aspect of the development may adversely affect the child's life (Confield et al. 1994). Children's capabilities and limitations, and emotional problems should be identified in the period of early childhood in preschool period and the necessary precautions must be taken (Krahnstoev, 2001). Therefore, in the preschool period that is described as early childhood period and covering zero-six age range, attitudes and behaviors towards child and provided educational opportunities will directly affect his/her personality development, learning experiences and his/her self-concept (Rotenberg et al. 2003).

This research is planned in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between the self-concepts of preschool children who attend the preschool education and those who do not attend.

Method

This research is planned as a "Descriptive" study in order to determine the importance of preschool education on the development of self- concepts of students (Kaptan, 1998).

The population of this study is constituted by third grade students who attend to public schools in Çankaya district in Ankara at the 2002- 2003 academic year. Among 13 primary schools, a total of 560 third grade students, determined by layering technique, 262 preschool students and 268 students who do not attend preschool education comprise the research sample of this study.

In order to collect the data, we went to schools to obtain general information about students by contacting guidance services in line with school administration and teachers' opinions and permissions. Personal information form developed by the researcher was used in order to get students' demographic information. To measure the dependent variable "self- concepts" of the study, "Piers-Harris Children Self-Concept Scale" was used (Öner, 1994).

The collected data were analyzed in SPS statistic program. In data analysis, determining the scale scores of groups, arithmetic mean and standard deviation were used. Some personal information about the students who attend and not attend to preschool education and about their family are expressed by using frequencies and percentages on crosstabs. In the study, two-dimensional variance analysis (ANOVA) was done in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between some variables and students' self-concepts level, gender, having sister or brother, birth order, parents' age, education and occupation. (Kaptan, 1998).

Result

Among the mean scores of students' self-concept scale, there is a significant difference according to attendance to preschool education ($t(690)=3.78, p<.01$). The self-concept levels of students attending preschool education were higher than those who do not.

There is no significant difference in terms of gender among the mean scores of students' self-concept scale according to attendance to preschool education. The variation of students attending preschool education is ($t(304)=1.20, p>.05$); the variation of those who do not attend preschool education is ($t(377)=1.64, p>.05$).

Among the mean scores of students' self-concept scale according to attendance to preschool education, there is no significant difference in terms of having a brother or sister or not having. The variable for those attending preschool education is ($t(304)=0.479, p>.05$) and for those who do not attend preschool education is ($t(377)=1.920, p>.05$).

Among the mean scores of students' self-concept scale according to attendance of preschool education, there is no significant difference with regard to the time of attendance to preschool education ($t(2;304)=0.897, p>.05$).

Again there is no significant difference in terms of birth order among the mean scores of students' self-concept scale according to attendance to preschool education. The variable for those attending preschool education is ($t(2;303)=0.755, p>.05$) and for those who do not attend preschool education is ($t(2;377)=0.269, p>.05$).

Among the mean scores of students' self-concept scale according to attendance to preschool education, there is no significant difference in terms of mother's age. The variable for those attending preschool education is ($f(2;302)=0.463, p>.05$) and for those who do not attend preschool education is ($f(2;375)=0.843, p>.05$).

There is a significant difference in terms of father's age among the mean scores of students' self-concept scale according to attendance to preschool education. The variation of students attending preschool education is ($f(2;303)=0.554, p<.01$); the variation of those who do not attend preschool education is ($f(2;369)=6.682, p<.01$).

When the results were analyzed, the self-concept levels of students attending to preschool education were higher than the levels of those who do not attend the preschool education.

There is a significant difference in terms of mother's education among the mean scores of students' self-concept scale according to attendance to preschool education. The variation of students attending preschool education is ($f(4;267)=1.946, p<.01$); the variation of those who do not attend preschool education is ($f(5;288)=1.950, p<.01$). When the average scale score is analyzed, it can be said that if the education level of mother is high, the self-concept level will be high. However, when the results

were analyzed, it is seen that the education levels of mothers whose children attend the preschool education are higher than those whose children do not attend to preschool education. For example, there is no illiterate among the mothers whose children attend the preschool education but there are illiterate parents among those whose children do not attend to preschool education.

Again there is a significant difference in terms of father's education among the mean scores of students' self-concept scale according to attendance to preschool education. The variation of students attending preschool education is ($f(4;271) = 1.871, p < .01$); the variation of those who do not attend preschool education is ($f(4;295) = 3.280, p < .05$). When analyzing the above-mentioned scale scores, if the father's education level is high, than the students self-concept levels will increase. Meanwhile, the average values between fathers who are literate and fathers who graduated from high school are very close. When analyzing the self-concept scale scores according to the students who do not attend to preschool education, self-concept levels of students whose fathers graduated from college are higher than those whose fathers are literate.

There is a significant difference in terms of parents' occupation among the mean scores of third grade students' self-concept scale.

According to the scale scores, a positive relation between mother's occupation and self-concept level is determined in terms of attending preschool education. The variation of students attending preschool education is ($f(2.280) = 2.849, P < .01$); the variation of those who do not attend preschool education is ($f(2.359) = 2.221, P < .01$). According to these results, students whose mothers are public servants have higher self-concept level than the other students. As the education levels of mothers whose children do not attend the preschool education are lower than those whose children attend this education, the self-concept levels of students whose mothers are housewives are higher than the other students.

Among the mean scores of third grade students' self-concept scale according to attendance to preschool education, there is a significant difference in terms of father's occupation. The variation of students attending preschool education is ($f(2.278) = 2.886, P < .01$); the variation of those who do not attend preschool education is ($f(3.350) = 3.856, P < .01$).

In this case, students whose fathers are public servants have higher self-concept level than the other students among the students who attend or not attend the preschool education. However, the self-concept levels of students whose fathers are employees are as high as to those whose fathers are public servants.

Conclusion

In the study, among the mean scores of third grade students' self-concept scale according to attending or not attending to preschool education, it is determined that

there is a significant difference in terms of attending preschool education ($p < 0.01$). According to scale implementation results, the self-concept levels of third grade students that attend to preschool education are higher than those who do not.

Suggestions

In our developing country, the importance given to the education of our children is increasing. School environment, that constitutes the second important environment following family, begins with the first and basic education gained with preschool education in the early childhood period (Stright, et al. 2003). Forming the first step of education process, preschool education will prepare the child to life and farther educational steps by presenting the support for all competence and development fields in preschool years (Doyle, 2000). Preschool education institutions aim to train individuals by giving the basic skills and experiences in a way the child could understand and also these institutions provide active learning opportunities to child in order to learn incidents, situations, objects and concepts (Purkey et al.1996). Effective collaboration with the family is inevitable for a school environment. Forming the basis of child-family-school trinity and integrating with family have made preschool education institutions obligatory and indispensable (Ömeroğlu, 1992). Therefore;

- In order to raise the awareness of society, families, parents and children about the importance of preschool education that carried out in two sources- private and public-, some programs and collective activities such as seminars, panels, and mass media can be organized.

- The preschool classes within the primary or vocational high schools can be extended if needed care and support is given.

- The projects that aim to make the preschool education compulsory can be enhanced by the Ministry of Education and Social Services Department with a conscious that preschool education is a right from which every child should benefit and also experts of preschool education in early childhood should be included into this process.

- Educational seminars in order to improve the collaboration of school and family can be organized with experts, institutions and organizations by designing mother-father-teacher education programs which can raise the awareness of parents.

- Apart from this study which aims to examine the effects of preschool education on self-concept, some other studies about the possible changes that preschool education makes on the child and parents can be done.

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Tables

Table 1. Demographic Information about Children According to Participation in Early Childhood Education

Variable	Group	Students attending preschool education		Students not attending preschool education		Total	
		N	%	N	%	\	%
Gender	Female	14	46.3	18	49.6	33	48.1
	Male	16	53.3	191	50.4	35	51.7
	Total	30	100	37	100	68	100
Being Brother or Sister	Yes	23	78.1	34	91.8	58	85.7
	No	6	21.9	3	8.2	9	14.3
	Total	30	100	37	100	68	100
Time of Attending School	One year	15	50.3				
	Two year	5	18.6				
	Three year +	9	31.1				
	Total	30	100				
Birth Order	First child	13	43.8	11	31.1	25	36.7
	Middle child	8	28.9	8	21.8	16	23.5
	Last child	14	47.1	17	47.1	32	47.8
	Total	30	100	38	100	68	100

Table 2. Demographic Information about Parents According to Participation in Early Childhood Education

Variable	Group	Students attending preschool education		Students not attending preschool education		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Mother's Age	30 and below	55	18.0	119	31.5	174	25.5
	31-40	208	66.2	222	58.7	430	63.0
	41 and over	42	13.8	37	9.8	79	11.6
	Total	305	100	378	100	683	100
Father's Age	30 and below	5	2.6	25	6.7	33	4.9
	31-40	118	61.4	235	64.0	426	62.5
	41 and over	110	35.9	107	29.3	219	32.3
	Total	306	100	372	100	678	100
Mother's Education	Illiterate	-	-	40	13.6	40	7.1
	Literate	15	5.5	47	16.0	62	11.0
	Graduated from primary school	30	11.0	94	32.0	124	21.9
	Graduated from secondary school	25	9.2	45	15.3	70	12.4
	Graduated from high school	99	38.4	53	18.0	152	26.9
	Graduated from college	103	37.9	15	5.1	118	20.8
	Total	272	100	294	100	566	100
	Father's Education	Illiterate	-	-	-	-	-
Father's Education	Literate	14	5.1	49	16.3	63	10.9
	Graduated from primary school	15	5.4	84	28.0	99	17.2

	Graduated from secondary school	24	8.7	50	16.7	74	12.8
	Graduated from high school	91	33.0	82	27.3	173	30.0
	Graduated from college	132	47.8	35	11.7	167	29.0
	Total	276	100	300	100	576	100
Mother's	Without occupation	141	49.0	304	82.6	445	67.8
Occupation	Employee	5	1.7	31	8.4	36	5.5
	Public servant	118	41.0	6	1.6	124	18.9
	Self-employment	24	8.3	27	7.3	51	7.8
	Total	288	100	368	100	656	100
Father's	Without occupation	7	2.4	34	9.6	41	6.4
Education	Employee	42	14.6	124	35.0	166	25.9
	Public servant	134	46.5	55	15.5	189	29.4
	Self-employment	105	36.5	141	39.8	246	38.3
	Total	288	100	354	100	642	100

Table 3. T-test and ANNOVA Results of Self-concept Level in Terms of Child's Variables Based on the Attendance to Preschool Education

Variable	Group	Students attending preschool education						Students not attending preschool education					
		n		S	Sd	t	p	n	X	S	Sd	t	p
Gender	Female	143	65.20	9.66	304	1.20	.230	188	62.55	10.81	377	1.64	.101
	Male	163	63,87	9.58				191	60.75	0.45 ¹			
	Total												

Being brother or sister	Yes	239	64.72	9.56	304	.479	.632	348	62.02	10.31	377	1.92	.056
	No	67	64.09	9.64				31	58.19	10.80			
	Total												
Variable	Group	n		S	Sd	f	P	n		S	Sd	f	p
Time of Attending Preschool Education	This year	156	62.29	9.16	2.304	.897	.409						
	Two years	58	64.05	10.1									
	Three years +	93	63.72	9.81									
	Total	307	64.58	9.54									
Birth Order	First child	134	64.99	9.01	2.303	.755	.471	118	62.18	11.54	2.377	.269	.764
	Middle child	28	62.53	10.9				83	61.06	9.67			
	Last child	44	64.54	9.91				179	61.64	10.55			
	Total	306	64.55	9.62				380	61.68	10.67			

Table 4. ANNOVA Test Results of Self- concept Level in Terms of Parents' Variables Based on the Attendance to Preschool Education

Variable	Group	Students attending preschool education						Students not attending preschool education					
		n	X	S	Sd	f	P	N	X	S	Sd	f	P
Mother's Age	30 and below	55	64.74	9.24	2.302	.773	.483	119	61.41	10.9	2.375	.171	.843
	31-40	28	64.19	9.79				22	61.96	10.5			

	41 and over	42	64.5	9.5				37	61.1	10.9			
	Total	305	64.57	9.57				378	61.70	10.6			
Father's Age	30 and below	8	62.87	7.32	2.303	.554	.575	25	54.40	12.0			
	31-40	118	64.23	9.83				238	62.41	10.7			
	41 and over	110	65.29	9.23				109	62.03	9.38			
	Total	306	64.58	9.55				372	61.76	10.6	2.369	6.68	.001
Mother's Education	Illiterate	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	58.30	11.2	5.288	1.95	.086
	Literate	15	61.80	7.36	4.267	1.95	.103	47	60.55	11.5			
	Primary school	30	61.63	10.3				94	61.79	10.9			
	Secondary school	25	63.48	9.20				45	63.95	10.8			
	High school	99	64.70	10.4				53	1,3 OK	11.5			
	College	103	66.26	8.51				15	65.26	9.31			
	Total	272	64.68	9.53				294	62.02	11.1			
Father's Education	Illiterate	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-
	Literate	14	64.50	13.2	4.271	1.87	.116	49	57.86	11.4	4.295	3.28	.012
	Primary school	15	59.07	12.8				84	62.21	10.1			

	Secondary school	24	62.25	9.80				50	62.16	10.2			
	High school	91	64.71	8.72				82	61.43	12.5			
	College	132	65.51	9.51				35	66.14	7.58			
	Total	276	64.56	9.75				300	61.90	10.9			
Mother's Occupation	Without occupation	141	63.57	10.1	2.280	2.85	.060	304	62.10	10.5	2.359	2.22	.110
	Employee	5				-	-	31	57.90	11.5			
	Public servant	118	66.20	7.88				6	-	-	-	-	-
	Self-employment	24	63.04	12.5				27	61.48	11.9			
	Total	283	64.62	9.54				362	61.70	10.6			
Father's Occupation	Without occupation	7			2.278	2.89	.057	34	56.52	10.9	3.350	3.86	.010
	Employee	42	65.12	9.03				124	61.60	11.0			
	Public servant	134	65.91	7.72				55	64.22	9.62			
	Self-employment	105	63.02	11.1				141	62.13	10.3			
	Total	281	64.71	9.37				354	61.73	10.7			