

The effect of parental education levels on children's rights knowledge levels and attitude

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to reveal the relationship between the attitudes of parents toward children's rights and educational levels of their parents. The researcher's universe consists of parents who live in Istanbul and has children between the ages of 6 and 14, and sampling consists of a total of 3100 parents (1550 mothers and 1550 fathers). The data of the study were collected with a Likert type Parent-Child Rights Attitude Scale consisting of 63 items. The scale evaluates the attitudes of the parents toward their children's rights as two main attitudes, 'Care and Protection' and 'Self-Determination'. In 'Care and Protection' attitude, there are two sub-dimensional structures as 'Government Assurance and Support' and 'Care and Protection'. The 'Self-Determination' attitude has a single sub-dimensional structure. In the analysis of data, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences program was used beside necessary statistical techniques. The data obtained regarding the effect of parents' education levels on their attitudes toward children's rights are presented in a tabular form with respective frequencies.

Keywords: Children's rights, parent's attitudes toward child rights, parent's attitudes

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1. Introduction

The child is a candidate to become an adult person (Başaran, 2011). For child to develop a healthy personality and adapt to the social environment, the importance of the mother-father-child relationship is better understood with each passing day (Çağdaş, 2015).

As Sharma and Dulger (2004) say, raising balanced children is an art. Although social factors, traditions and customs play a role in raising children, parents need to be conscious (Gökmar, 2016). Family, which is considered as the smallest social unit in the society, is seen as the main source for the psycho-social and cognitive development of the child (Cavkaytar et al., 2010).

The law, whose main purpose and function is to protect the weak, and especially international law in the context of the international community, has started to make important regulations for the protection of children and their rights since the early 1900s (Odman, 2008).

Children's rights are their birthrights as they need care and protection as a human being (Akyüz, 2000). The Convention on the Rights of the Child paved the way for children to become active individuals in society by improving citizenship status by birth. Together with this convention, children are recognised as individuals who have rights and exercise their rights in society. Thus, today's children are evaluated differently from children in the past as individuals whose rights are recognised and approved (Doek, 2008). This understanding, which developed after the II World War and embracing the participation of the child in social life, changed the child concept in the traditional sense and enabled the children to take an active role in the social life.

The need to pay special attention to the child is included extensively in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as addressed in the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1924 and in the Declaration on the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November, 1959, and as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (in particular Articles 23 and 24) and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in particular Article 10).

Containing 'who is a child, what is a child?' question and defining the right of the child to be an individual from birth, The Convention on the Rights of the Child, drawn up as a result of 10 years of work to protect the child's special rights and needs, and to take the opinion of the child himself, based on the idea that only the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights will not be sufficient to ensure that this right is implemented internationally, was the first international convention on children adopted unanimously at the 44th General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November, 1989.

After approval, the Convention was opened on 26 January, 1990 for signature by the member states of the United Nations. Sixty-one countries signed the document on the same day. Today, 193 countries including Turkey are agreed on behaviour patterns defined by the United Nations Children's Rights, which are giving minimum responsibilities related to children primarily to the parents and family, community, youth, teachers, health workers, security guards and state.

In fact, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child gathers together the rights interspersed with the laws of developed countries and aims to ensure them to be recognised as common and indisputable rights of all children of the world. These rights may appear to us as clear and indisputable today. However, the acquisition of these most natural rights was realised centuries later. The Declaration is the result and accumulation of positive developments in the field of education, health and law in the last few centuries (Yörükoğlu, 2007).

By the Turkey Ombudsman Institution; a children's web page has been created in which children between 7–12 and 12–18 years can share the problems they have experienced in administrations such as schools, hospitals, childcare organisations, governorship, district governor, fire department and

municipality. This page includes activity announcements and information on the importance of children's rights, exemplary decisions taken and various legal regulations. This site, which serves under the name of ombudsman, deals with the complaints of children aged 7–18 years. As a result of the constitutional amendment made after 12 September, 2010, it is decided to establish the Ombudsman's Office. It is appropriate to say that this institution, which does not have a long history, is quite new in terms of protecting children's rights and that the knowledge of parents and children regarding the existence of these practices is extremely inadequate.

The purpose of this study is to reveal the relation between the attitudes of parents toward children's rights and educational levels of their parents. In our country, it has been found that the studies conducted to determine the level of knowledge of parents about child rights are insufficient. In this respect, the following questions were sought in the study which was deemed necessary:

1. Do the attitudes of the parents involved in the research toward children's rights differ according to demographic characteristics?
2. Do the attitudes of the parents toward children's rights differ?
3. Do the attitudes of the parents toward children's rights differ according to their educational level?

This study is;

Important in terms of revealing the relationship between parent-child rights attitudes and education and raising awareness of parents about child rights.

In this context, the data are examined in terms of various variables and suggestions are developed within the results of the study.

2. Method

This study, which was conducted to determine the attitudes of parents toward children's rights, was designed as a 'screening model', one of the quantitative research methods. This model is a research approach that aims to describe the past and present situation as it is. The screening model is performed on the whole universe, which is consisting of a larger number of elements, or on the sample or group to be taken from it (Karasar, 1998).

3. Universe and Sample

The population of the study consists of parents living in Istanbul. The sample of the study consists of 1550 mothers and 1550 fathers who are randomly selected from this universe.

4. Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, 'Parent-Child Rights Attitude Scale' developed by Yurtsever (2009) was used to collect data. The scale consists of 63 items. It evaluates the attitudes of the parents' toward their child's rights under two main factors, 'Care and Protection' and 'Self-Determination'. 'Care and Protection' factor has a structure consist of two factors as 'Government Assurance and Support' and 'Care and Protection'; and 'Self-Decision-Making' has a single sub-dimensional structure. The Cronbach α -reliability coefficient of the 'Government Assurance and Support' section of the scale is 0.9806 and the Cronbach α -reliability coefficient of the 'Care and Protection' section is 0.9490. The Cronbach α -

reliability coefficient of the ‘Self-Decision’ section of the scale is 0.9772. Parent-Child Rights Attitudes is a 5-point Likert type scale. Scoring is made according to the degree of acknowledge as ‘I fully agree (5 points)’, ‘partially agree (4 points)’, ‘undecided (3 points)’, ‘disagree (2 points)’ and ‘disagree (1 point)’.

In the study, the data obtained from the measurement tool used to determine the attitudes of parents toward children’s rights were analysed according to the demographic characteristics of the parents. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 15.0 program was used to analyse the data obtained from the applied scale. In the study, frequency and percentage values are determined and t-test and one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) are used to observe the difference between the groups formed based on demographic characteristics.

5. Findings and Comments

Parent-child rights attitudes scale and some demographic characteristics were presented to the parents who participated in the study. The frequencies and percentages of the demographic characteristics are given in Tables 1-6.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage values related to children’s age and gender variables

	f	%	f	%	f	%
	Girl		Boy		Total	
7 years old	76	2.4	82	2.7	158	5.1
8 years old	293	9.5	297	9.6	590	19.0
9 years old	68	2.2	48	1.5	116	3.7
10 years old	268	8.6	193	6.2	461	14.9
11 years old	285	9.2	337	10.9	622	20.1
12 years old	263	8.5	214	6.9	447	15
13 years old	232	7.5	228	7.4	460	14.8
14 years old	105	3.4	111	3.6	216	7.0
Total	1590	51.3	1510	48.7	3100	100

In Table 1, the distribution of the children of the participating parents according to age and gender is given. About 48.7% of the children are boys and 51.3% are girls range from 7 to 14 years.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage values related to parents’ education

	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
	Primary school		Secondary/High School		Bachelor's degree/PhD		Total	
Mother	604	19.5	448	15.7	458	14.8	1550	50
Father	449	14.5	612	19.7	489	15.5	1550	50
Total	1053	34.0	1100	35.5	947	30.5	3100	100

Table 2 shows the distribution of educational status of the parents. About 19.5% of the mothers who participated in the study have primary education, 15.7% have secondary/high school and 14.8% have post bachelor's degree/postgraduate level education. About 14.5% of the fathers who participated in the study have primary education, 19.7% have secondary/high school and 15.5% have post bachelor’s degree/postgraduate level education. There are no parents having doctorate’s degree among the parents who participated in the study. When the education levels of 1550 mothers and 1550 fathers were categorised, it was found that fathers' education levels are relatively higher than mothers.

Table 3. Frequency and percentage values related to parents’ occupations

	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
	Engineer		Teacher		Health personnel		Worker		Housewife		HR		Other	
Mother	25	0.0	113	3.6	31	1.0	26	0.8	1055	34.1	120	3.9	180	5.8
Father	92	3.0	54	1.8	29	0.9	877	28.3	-	-	219	7.0	279	9.0
Total	117	3.8	167	5.4	60	1.9	903	29.1	1055	34.1	339	10.9	459	14.8

Table 3 shows the occupational distributions of parents who participated in the study. It is observed that the mothers who participated in the study are mostly in the housewife category with the highest average of 34.1%. On the other hand, it is possible to say that the fathers reached the highest percentage in the occupational category with an average of 28.3%. With an average of 14.8%, mothers and fathers in the others category are distributed to such professions as hairdressers, cleaning workers, drivers, cooks, security guards, cashiers, babysitters and retirees. Since parents with occupations in this category are between 1% and 10%, they are not considered under a separate occupation category.

Table 4. Frequency and percentage values related to distribution of school type of children according to parent's education levels

	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
	Primary School		Secondary/High School		Bachelor's Degree/PhD		Total	
Private School	117	5.7	291	9.4	467	15.1	934	30.2
State School	876	28.2	809	26.1	480	15.5	2164	69.8
Total	1053	34.0	1100	35.5	947	30.5	3100	100

Table 4 shows the distribution of school types of children according to the educational status of the parents. The majority of parents with primary education preferred to send their children to a public school. While the majority of parents with secondary/high school education still prefer to send their children to public school, it is possible to say that there is a partial increase in the rate of sending to private school compared to parents with primary school education. Parents with bachelor's degree/postgraduate level education prefer to send their children to the public school with 50.7%, while 49.3% prefer to send their children to private school. From this point of view, it is observed that as the education levels of parents increases, their tendency to send their children to private school also increases.

Table 5. Results of t-test on distribution of parent child rights attitude according to parents

		n	x	ss	f	p
Government assurance and support	Mother	1550	4.4896	0.744	0.507	0.703
	Father	1550	4.4787	0.790		
Self-decision-making	Mother	1550	4.2188	0.744	5.781	0.069
	Father	1550	4.1686	0.790		
Care and protection	Mother	1550	4.5651	0.789	0.852	0.283
	Father	1550	4.5342	0.813		

p>0.05

Table 5 shows independent group t test results used to determine whether there is a significant difference in the Parent-Child Rights Attitude scores. As a result of the analysis comparing the children's rights attitude levels according to the affinity status of the parents, there is no significant difference between the scores of parents at government assurance and support, self-decision-making and care and protection fields (p > 0.05). From this point of view, it is possible to say that the attitudes of the parents who participated in the study toward the rights of the child are at a similar level.

Table 6. Results of one-way analysis of variance related to distribution of Parent-Child Rights Attitude scale sub-dimension scores according to parent's education levels variable

	Groups	n	x	ss	f	p
Government	Primary School	1053	4.113	1.174	197.15	0.01
Assurance and	Secondary/High	1100	4.648	0.420		

support	School					
	Bachelor’s	947	4.704	0.297		
	Degree/PhD					
	Total	3100	4.484	0.793		
Care and protection	Primary School	1053	4.194	1.208	174.46	0.01
	Secondary/High School	1100	4.715	0.401		
	Bachelor’s	947	4.752	0.282		
	Degree/PhD					
	Total	3100	4.549	0.801		
Self-decision-making	Primary School	1053	3.912	1.114	115.08	0.01
	Secondary/High School	1100	4.334	0.466		
	Bachelor’s	947	4.342	0.405		
	Degree/PhD					
	Total	3100	4.193	0.768		

When the sub-dimensions of government assurance and support of Parent-Child Rights Attitude scale are compared, it is seen that the highest average belongs to bachelor’s degree/postgraduate level parents ($x = 4.704$). This is followed by parents who have high school education ($x = 4.648$). The lowest average is found to belong to the parents with primary school education ($x = 4.113$).

When the care and protection sub-dimension levels of the Parent-Child Rights Attitude scale are compared, the highest average is bachelor’s degree/postgraduate level parents ($x = 4.752$) followed by high school graduated parents ($x = 4.715$). The lowest average is found to belong to the parents with primary school education ($x = 4.194$). According to the results of the analysis, it was found that there is a difference from primary education level parents to high school and bachelor’s degree/postgraduate level parents.

When the self-decision sub-dimension levels of the parents are compared, it is observed that the highest average level belonged to the parents with bachelor’s degree/postgraduate level education ($x = 4.342$). It is possible to say that the parents with high school education ($x = 4.334$) have an average close to the bachelor’s degree/postgraduate level parents. Primary education ($x = 3.912$) level of parents has the lowest average.

A parametric test, ANOVA, is used to determine whether the attitudes of participants toward child rights differed significantly. As a result of the ANOVA, the direction of the difference is determined in each of three sub-dimensions, government assurance and support, care and protection, and self-decision-making, from parents with primary school education to parents with high school and bachelor’s degree/postgraduate level education. From this point of view, it is possible to say that there is no significant difference in the attitudes of the high school and bachelor’s degree/postgraduate level parents toward child’s rights and that the attitudes of the parents with primary school education toward child’s rights differ from high school and bachelor’s degree/postgraduate level parents.

6. Conclusion and Suggestions

The aim of this study is to determine whether education levels have an effect on parents' attitudes toward children's rights.

When the findings obtained from the study were evaluated, the following results were obtained.

- 1550 mothers and 1550 fathers participated in the study.
- The age distribution of the children of the parents who participated in the study is between 7 and 14 years and 48.7% of the children are boys and 51.3% are girls.
- About 34% of the parents have primary education, 35.5% have secondary/high school and 30.5% have bachelor's degree/postgraduate level education. The education level of the fathers who participated in the study was found to be higher than the mothers.
- When the occupational distribution of the parents is examined, it is found that the majority of the mothers are housewives and the fathers are workers.
- It is found that the types of schools that parents prefer to send their children to be related to the educational level of the parents. As the education level of parents increases, so does their tendency to send their children to private school.
- In this study, where the attitudes of the parents toward the child's rights are determined by the parent-child rights attitude scale, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the attitudes of the parents toward the child rights in terms of government assurance and support, self-decision-making and care and protection.
- When the effects of parental education levels on child rights attitudes are examined, it is seen that the attitudes of parents with primary education level toward child rights differ from secondary education/high school and bachelor's degree/postgraduate level parents in government assurance and support, self-decision-making, care and protection sub-dimensions. It is found that parents with secondary/high school education are very close to parents with bachelor's degree/postgraduate education and they favour government assurance and support, care and protection and self-decision-making more than parents with primary education level.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is seen as the 'Human Rights Law of the World Children'. The convention is based on defining the norms of ensuring that children should live in best conditions and fully realise themselves. It aims to give them a chance to develop physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and morally, free, respectable, honourable and healthy.

The convention, which defines individuals up to the age of 18 as children, guarantees their right to live; the right to full development; the right to protection from harmful effects, abuse and exploitation; family, culture and social life. The convention provides for specific regulations and provisions for children requiring special attention and education.

When the studies conducted in our country are examined, it is found that there is limited number of studies on children's rights. Therefore, in this study, the attitudes of the parents toward the rights of their children are evaluated in the light of the conventions adopted by the state on child rights and in line with parents' education levels.

Based on the results of this research, the following can be suggested;

- Attitudes of the parents toward children's rights are affected from education variable. In this respect, it is thought that providing necessary education on the rights of children to parents will have a positive effect on their attitudes toward the rights of their children.
- This research is limited to Istanbul. Researches to be conducted in different regions and provinces of our country where different cultural, social and economic sample groups are formed

would be considered important since they would provide an opportunity to evaluate the attitudes of parents toward children's rights throughout the country.

- To make studies in our country on children's rights with various occupational groups, parents who want to have children and with children in line with various variables would contribute to the field.
- In addition to informing parents about children's rights, children should also be provided with the opportunity to learn and defend their rights.

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