AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 48-60 MONTHS OLD PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S TEACHER-CHILD RELATIONS AND THE CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC SELF-ESTEEM

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between 48-60 months old preschool children's academic self-esteem and the teacher-child relationships. The universe of this study is composed of 48-60 months old children who were attending either state or private kindergartens in 2014-2015 academic year in Doğubayazıt province of Ağrı and their teachers. Through the simple random sampling method, the number of subjects was determined as being at least 264 and as a result 272 children were contacted. The children were continuing their preschool education in 35 different classes. The sample of the study is composed of 35 teachers and 272 children attending these teachers' classes. The data were collected through "Child Information Questionnaire", "Teacher-Child Relationships Questionnaire", and "Academic Self-Esteem Questionnaire". In terms of academic self-esteem level, the results were revealed a statistically significant difference according to the children's genders, ability to use Turkish, and the educational level of their parents. A statistically significant positive relationship was determined between the scores of self-esteem scale and teacher-child relationships scale.

Keywords: Teacher-child relationship, academic self-esteem, self-esteem

INTRODUCTION

During the lifetime of an individual, there are some periods which deserve a more careful investigation due to its importance in terms of psychological and physical developments. In the preschool period development is at the fastest pace, the roots of personality are set, the child is more prone to being affected by his/her environment, and open to every kind of learning. The preschool age is the most critical period of life due to its effect on the following years about the formation of the personality, gaining and developing the basic knowledge, skills and habits (Gültekin-Akduman, 2011; Gültekin-Akduman et al., 2015).

In the preschool period, the child develops rapidly. The research showed that the majority of the behaviors that a child gains at this age, shape the personality, manner, habit, belief, and values in the adulthood period (Kandır and Alpan, 2008). Preschool education supports children's developing a concept of personality by gaining the gender identity, developing self-control by preparing them an environment in which they can express themselves, and developing a self-confident and independent personality (Günalp, 2007).

Preschool education which is the first step of our education system has a vital importance in terms of the future of our country and this period is very important in terms of child's development. Since the basic knowledge and skills are gained in this period.A child needs stimuli that enable the child to develop his/her inborn potential to achieve the highest level and show. These stimuli are composed of every kind of natural and environmental factors that will facilitate the child's physical, mental, social and emotional development. When these inputs are not given enough, even if they are provided in the next years, a lack of

attainment for the child will be observed in future. The basic knowledge and skills achieved through qualified and sufficient experiences will not only enhance the individual's chance of success in later learning experiences, but also will have a positive effect on his/her emotional and social life. A preschool teacher is supposed to be trained in a way that s/he has the knowledge and experiences to help the children to gain the knowledge and skills (Sözer, 2008).

Training children is the guarantee for a brighter future. Every country has to train their children in a peaceful, and safe environment through providing all of the necessary opportunities. After the family, the teacher who will totally change the child's life and present him/her a new identity has the primary responsibility for this issue (Dağlıoğlu, 2012).

Training a sufficient number of individuals qualified with appropriate behaviors is the overall goal of an education system in terms of production. Achieving this goal is an important condition, starting from preschool ages to higher education level. Therefore, preparation of an education environment for students in every education levels has become one of the main premises of every education system. The idea of the teachers who are going to train the people for the 21st century need to be highly different from the traditional teacher model in terms of knowledge, skill, attitude, and habits have gained more and more acceptance (Sözer, 2008).

The features of knowledge, skill, and attitudes that teachers in our country should possess are indicated in "General Teaching Profession Efficacies" and the field-specific knowledge, skill, and attitudes that teachers need to possess are indicated in "Field-Specific Efficacies" by the Directorate of Ministry of National Education Teacher Training and Development. The inclusion of school, family, society relations, and communication-related issues in this efficacies is a proof of the important place of teacher's relation with child in preschool education.

A qualified preschool education has a direct effect on future academic life, additionally, children who undergo a preschool education start the primary school with experience in terms of many areas regarding social and academic skills when compared to the children who do not get a preschool education (Kıldan, 2011). Establishing a concept of self in children is among the most prominent functions of preschool education. Preschool education provides opportunities through supporting child's efforts towards independence for the development of confidence; child's gaining self-awareness, self-understanding and self-explanation; development of positive attitudes against his/her own personality; learning gender roles; gaining self-control. Preschool education helps the development of a concept of self through enabling them to gain many positive behaviors such as meeting their own demands, controlling their behaviors, and living independently without limiting others independence (Gürkan, 2009). In previous studies, it has been observed that preschool education positively affected the academic self-esteem in the following years (Gökmen, 2009). However, it is thought that the effect of preschool education on the development of academic self-esteem is related to the quality of relation between child and teacher.

Self-esteem is an individual's finding himself/herself as valuable, competent, and successful as a result of self-assessment. The closer perceived personality (how s/he sees himself/herself) to the ideal personality (how s/he wants to be) of an individual the higher his/her self-esteem is. A high rate of the difference between the ideal personality and real personality of an individual causes his/her finding himself/herself as insufficient, unsuccessful, and worthless (Kılıççı, 1992; Yavuzer, 2000).

The concept of academic identity is a self-perception involving defining, and evaluation dimensions. This perception is related to the perception of our behaviors rather than emotions by ourselves. Academic identity is related to self-efficacy and perception of efficacy rather than the concepts such as self-acceptance, perceiving himself/herself as valuable, or self-esteem. Academic identity is the perception of the student's perception based on his/her previous learning experience about whether or not s/he can learn a knowledge unit (Gökmen, 2009).

The concept of academic identity refers to the student's perception of performance development in the field of discipline. For instance, a student's identification of himself/herself as hardworking and determined person is related to the academic identity. On the other hand, the concept of non-academic identity is related to social, emotional, physical appearance, and physical strength. An individual's ideas about himself/herself in his/her relations with peers and other persons who are important to him/her isrelated to the concept of social identity. The feeling of pressure after the course refers to emotional identity while an individual's perception of his/her physical appearance and strength refers to the physical identity (Aydın, 1996; Ülgen, 1997).

The development of identity and academic self-esteem starts from the childhood. Individuals are in constant relation with the social environment starting from their birth. This interaction starts with mother or another person taking care of the children, and the children's perceptions towards the environment increase along with the increase in their experiences. Thus, while forming ideas about themselves, the manners and attitudes of people whom they value, and the children's perceptions about these manners and attitudes gain importance. Therefore, the preschool period has an important role in this development to become good and qualified (Cevher and Buluş, 2006; Özcan, 2009).

The role of teacher cannot be ignored in the development of identity and academic self-esteem in the preschool period. In the previous studies, it has been observed that academic self-esteem was generally associated with academic achievement and attitude towards lesson (Göktaş, 2008; Karasakaloğlu and Saracoğlu, 2009; Kenc and Oktay, 2002; Koç, 2011; Piyancı, 2007; Şahin-Yanpar, 1994). When it comes to preschool period, in our country, academic self-esteem mostly investigated from the perspectives of demographic features and parent inclusion (Cevher, 2004; Özcan, 2012). It should be determined that how and to what extent the student-teacher relations in the preschool period affects academic self-esteem.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of the relations with preschool teacher on the academic self-esteem. With this purpose in mind this study seeks answers to the following questions:

1)   Is there a difference between the scores of the "Academic Self-Esteem Scale" and the following variables: a) Gender, b) The parents' education level, c) The number of siblings, d) The ability to use Turkish

2)   Is there a correlation between the scores of "Teacher-Child Relations Scale" and "Academic Self-Esteem Scale"?

METHODOLOGY

This study is conducted according to the descriptive model. The population of the study is composed of children aged between 48-60 months who were attending preschool institutions in 2014-2015 academic year in Doğubayazıt district of Ağrı, and their teachers. Through

simple random sampling method, 264 subjects were determined, as a result 272 children were contacted. The children were continuing their preschool education in 35 different classrooms. The sample of the study is composed of 35 teachers and 272 children in their classes. During the data collections teachers filled three forms namely; Child Information Form, Teacher-Child Relations Scale, and Academic Self-Esteem Scale.

The scores of Teacher-Child Relations Scale which was adapted to Turkish by Kıldan (2008) were found as; Cronbach Alpha being .90; Spearman-Brown Semi-Structured Test Correlation being .86; total item correlation as between .35 and .69; and finally factor loadings were found as between .42 and .75. The scores of internal consistency reliability analysis of Academic Self-Esteem Scale which was adapted to Turkish by Cevher (2004) revealed a .9565 Cronbach Alpha value. Two half test reliability was administered for reliability and the first half of the test revealed a reliability coefficient as .90, and the second half was found as .93 while Spearman-Brown correlation coefficient between the two halves was revealed as .86 and Guttman Split-Half reliability coefficient was found as .92.

The data collected in this study was analyzed through SPSS 20 package program. In the investigation of the difference between groups Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis-H tests were utilized since the variables were not coming from normally distributed. Since the unit numbers were higher than 20, standardized z values were given for Mann Whitney U Test. When significant differences were revealed in the Kruskal Wallis-H Test, Post-Hoc Multiple Comparison Test is used to identify the groups in between significant differences were existing. During the analysis of the relations between variables which were not normally distributed, Spearman's Correlation Coefficient was utilized. In the interpretation of the results being the level of significance values between 0,01 and 0,05 was used, when the values were $p < 0,01$ or $p<0,05$ it was considered as there is a significant relation, on the other hand if the values were $p> 0,05$ it was not considered as a significant relation.

FINDINGS

Findings Regarding the Scores of Academic Self-Esteem Scale

The relationships between the scores of Academic Self-Esteem Scale and the variables as child's gender, parents' level of education, number of siblings, and the ability to use Turkish was investigated. For the gender variable, Mann Whitney U test was administered. While Kruskal Wallis H Test was administered for the analysis of the variables as parents' level of education, number of siblings, and the ability to use Turkish. The results of the analysis are shown in Tables 1 to 4.

Table 1.Mann Whitney U Test results of Academic Self-Esteem Scale scores in terms of child's gender

Child's gender	The scores of Academic Self-Esteem Scale						Mann Whitney U Test		
	N	Mean	Median	Lowest	Highest	sd	Sequence mean	z	p
Boy	131	83,3	84	37	110	18,7	120,87		
Girl	141	90,1	93	43	110	17,8	151,02	-3,160	**0,002
Total	272	86,8	88	37	110	18,5			

**p<0,01

In terms of the relation between Academic Self-Esteem scores and children's genders, the results revealed a statistically significant difference (p<0,01). The academic self-esteem scores of boys were lower than girls' scores.

Table 2.Kruskal Wallis H Test results in terms of the scores of academic self-esteem scale and number of siblings

Number of siblings including the child	*Academic Self-Esteem Scale scores*						*Kruskal Wallis H Test*		
	N	*Mean*	*Median*	*Lowest*	*Highest*	*sd*	*Mean Rank*	*H*	*P*
1-2 siblings	65	90,2	93	43	110	18,4	99,63		
3-4 siblings	70	88,4	88	37	110	17,6	92,57	5,409	0,067
5+ siblings	46	83,3	83,5	40	110	18,1	76,41		
Total	181	87,7	88	37	110	18,1			

There is no significant relationship between the scores of academic self-esteem scale and the number of siblings (p>0,05).

Table 3.Kruskal Wallis H Test results in terms of academic self-esteem scale scores and the ability to use Turkish

		Academic self-esteem scale scores						*Kruskal Wallis H Test*		
		N	*Mean*	*Median*	*Lowest*	*Highest*	*sd*	*Mean Rank*	*H*	*P*
The ability to use Turkish when the children started the school	1	33	76,4	74	40	110	16,9	88,95		
	2	89	81,1	82	37	110	19,7	112,90	33,905	**0,001
	3	149	92,6	95	43	110	15,9	160,22		
	Total	271	86,9	88	37	110	18,5	Paired Comparisons: 1-3 2-3		

1: The child could not use the language at all,2:The child did not have good command of the language; but, s/he could use it,3:The child could use the language effectively in consistent with his/her developmental stages

**p<0,01

There is a statistically significant relationship between the scores of academic self-esteem scale and children's ability to use the Turkish language when they started to the school (p<0,01). The academic self-esteem scale scores of children who could not use Turkish at all, or the ones who used but did not have a good command of language were significantly lower than those who used the language in consistent with their developmental stages.

There is a significant relationship between the scores of academic self –esteem scale and mothers' level of education (p<0,05). The scores of children whose mothers are illiterate are significantly lower than the scores of children whose mothers are university graduates.

There is a statistically significant relationship between the scores of academic self-esteem scale and the education level of fathers (p<0,01). The scores of academic self-esteem scale for children whose fathers are illiterate and literate-primary school graduate were significantly lower than those whose fathers were university graduates.

Table 4. Kruskal Wallis H Test results in terms of the relation between academic self-esteem scale scores and parents' level of education

		Academic self-esteem scale scores						*Kruskal Wallis H Test*		
		N	*Mean*	*Median*	*Lowest*	*Highest*	*sd*	*Mean Rank*	*H*	*P*
Mother's Level of Education	Illiterate(1)	99	82,7	84	37	110	18,9	118,69		
	Literate-Primary School Graduate(2)	98	88,4	87	46	110	16,6	140,69		
	Secondary School Graduate(3)	26	86,9	91	56	110	15,3	131,85	13,581	*0,009
	High School Graduate(4)	39	89,9	96	40	110	23,4	160,99		
	University Graduate(5)	10	99,2	97,5	89	110	7,5	188,3		
	Total	272	86,8	88	37	110	18,5	Paired Comparisons: 1-3		

		Academic self-esteem scale scores						Kruskal Wallis H Test		
		N	Mean	Median	Lowest	Highest	sd	Mean Rank	H	P
Father's Level of Education	Illiterate(1)	27	78,7	82	37	110	21,2	105,83		
	Literate-Primary School Graduate(2)	134	85	85	40	110	17,6	126,67		
	Secondary School Graduate(3)	33	89,6	91	51	110	16,7	147,42	18,802	**0,001
	High School Graduate(4)	54	88,4	92,5	40	110	19,9	145,67		
	University Graduate(5)	24	98,4	100,5	67	110	13,3	190,25		
	Total	272	86,8	88	37	110	18,5	Paired Comparisons: 1-5 2-5		

*p<0.05, **p<0,01

Findings about Teacher-Student Relationships and Academic Self-Esteem

The correlation between Teacher-Student Relationships Scale and Academic Self-Esteem Scale was investigated. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The results of correlation test between the scores of Teacher-Student Relationships Scale and the scores of Academic Self-Esteem Scale

		The scores of academic self-esteem scale
The scores of teacher-student relationships scale	r	**0,608**
	p	0,001
	n	272

There is a statistically significant relationship between the scores of teacher-student relationships scale and academic self-esteem scale. Though this relationship is not strong it is a positive relationship (r=0,608). As the scores of teacher-student scale raise, the scores of academic self-esteem scale raise as well.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There is a statistically significant relationship between academic self-esteem scores, and children's gender, ability to use Turkish, parents' education level (p<0,05).

The scores of male children's academic self-esteem scale scores were significantly lower than female children's scores (p<0,01). This finding reveals that in the in-class learning activities female children perceive themselves as more competent than male children. The subjects in pre-school education are not purpose but they are media. The subjects of activities may be selected as being more motivating for female children. In such a situation the gain indicators for girls will be observed faster, that may be the reason why their academic self-esteem levels are higher. Girls may have closer relationships with teachers, as a result of this, they may perceive themselves more competent by receiving more positive reinforcement from their teachers. In addition to this, there are differing findings in the literature about the level of academic self-esteem and gender. Similar to this study, Can (2015) found that the level of girls' academic self-esteem was higher than boys'. In his study Özcan (2012) it was revealed that girls' and boys' scores of Academic Self-Esteem Scale were close to each other. In Özcan's (2012) study the level of girls' academic self-esteem was higher than boys' level of academic self-esteem; however, there were not a statistically significant relationship. On the other hand, Cevher (2004) found that the boys' academic self-esteem levels were higher than girls'.Ergin (2012) stated that children in pre-school education revealed statistically significant relationships in terms of gender and the scores of Cognitive Competence which is one of the sub-dimensions of The Scale of Children's Perception of Self (Identity). In this study, it is asserted that girls' cognitive competence were higher than boys'. Findings of Gizirand Baran's (2003) study revealed that the scores of boys in the sub-dimension of positive identity were significantly lower than girls scores. These differences in the findings of previous studies lead to think that academic self-esteem does not vary according to the gender, but the attitude of the environment and learning experiences.

Academic self-esteem of children who cannot use Turkish at all and those who use but not proficient in the language are lower than the children who can use Turkish in consistent with their developmental stages (p<0,01). An individual's academic self-esteem occurs as a result of a comparison between his/her own learning speed with peers. In a classroom, individuals who are not proficient in language learn slower compared to their peers. Based on this the individual may not perceive himself or herself as competent as his/her peers. Therefore, their level of academic self-esteem may have occurred as lower compared to their peers. Senemoğlu (1989) indicated that the low proficiency in language limits thinking. The limited vocabulary and misuse of words naturally result in a decrease in the success at school. The contribution of effective language use to cognitive development and future learning at school is undeniable. Similar to the present study Ergin (2012) found a significantly positive relationship between the scores of The Scale of Children's Perception of Self (Identity) and Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

The scores of academic self-esteem scale in children whose mothers are illiterate are significantly lower than the children whose mothers are high school graduates (p<0,05). Similarly, the scores of children whose fathers are literate-graduates of primary school are significantly lower than those whose fathers are university graduates (p<0,01). It is not

possible for the illiterate parents to obtain and read books for child development and education. This situation may lead the illiterate individuals to unaware and insufficient about child development and education. Children whose parents are illiterate may have lower academic self-esteem since they deprived of sufficient family support in terms of developmental level. Similar to the findings of the present study Can (2015) stated that as mothers' education level rises, children's academic self-esteem rise as well. Likewise, it has been found in Can's (2015) study that academic self-esteem of children whose fathers are primary school graduates was lower than those whose fathers have MA or Ph.D. degree. Though these findings are expected, they are different from the literature. Cevher' (2004) study showed that the higher children's mothers' education level is, the lower their academic self-esteem. On the other hand, Çağrı (2012) indicated that there is no significant relationship between academic self-esteem of children and parents' level of education. Such differences between studies may be a result of the differences in the demographic features of subjects. Most of the participants under the scope of this study are composed of children whose parents are illiterate or literate/primary school graduates.

There is no significant relationship between the two variables as academic self-esteem and number of siblings (p>0,05). The findings revealed that there is no significant relationship between the level of academic self-esteem and the number of siblings. Since there are positive and negative factors stemming from living in a family with more than one children, and having siblings; a difference in the academic self-esteem level may be expected. However, the facilities provided to the child may not change based on the number of siblings.Since the number of siblings will not have any considerable effect on the development of child, this situation may be the reason behind the fact that no significant relationship was found in terms of academic self-esteem scores. Similar to the findings of this study Yakupoğlu's (2011) study revealed that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem in early childhood period and the number of siblings. Cevher (2004) and Özcan (2012) revealed that the number of siblings does not have a significant effect on academic self-esteem. Can (2015) highlighted that there is no significant relationship between the number of siblings and the level of academic self-esteem.

There is statistically significant positive relationship between teacher-student relationships scale scores and academic self-esteem scale scores (r=0,608). The children who have positive relationships with teacher will receive interest, acknowledgment, and intimacy the teacher, therefore, this may lead to a high level of academic self-esteem.In addition to this, the children who have high academic self-esteem level may have higher motivation to learn, and positive attitude towards education. Their positive attitudes towards their education may strengthen their relationships with teachers. Piyancı (2007), Göktaş (2008), and Gökmen found a positive relationship between academic self-esteem level and success. Children with high academic self-esteem may be more successful, therefore, teachers may have positive attitude towards those children. It has been observed that there is a statistically significant and positive relationship between the scores of academic self-esteem scale and teacher-student relationships scale. Children who have a more positive relationship with their teachers can be said to have a higher academic self-esteem level.

In this study, the effect of teacher-child relationship on the academic aspect of identity has been investigated. The effect of teacher-child relationship on other aspects of identity can be investigated. Children's ability to use Turkish has been determined based on teachers' reports. The relationship among language development levels of children, teacher-child relationship and academic self-esteem can be investigated. Administering the scales used in this study at the beginning and end of the academic year the change in teacher-child relationship and academic self-esteem can be investigated. Teacher-child relationship and

academic self-esteem level can be investigated in relation to children's or parents' perceptions.

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