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## Examination of Preschool Children's Social Emotional Skills & Resilience Levels and Father-Child Communication\*

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### Abstract

The fact that fathers are more involved in child care than in the past has made them more able to communicate with their children. At an early age, positive communication between father and child creates a secure attachment. With the realization of secure attachment, the foundations are laid for the child to have confidence in himself and his abilities, to have positive self-esteem, and to stand strong in the face of difficulties. A child with positive social-emotional skills is expected to adapt more easily to the environment and changes. This brings along psychological well-being and resilience. This study examines the relationship between preschool children's social-emotional skills, psychological resilience levels and father-child communication. The research was planned in correlative survey model and carried out with fathers with children between three and seven years old. The data were collected by convenient sampling method and 46 fathers and their children were included in the research. Social-Emotional Skills and Psychological Resilience Scale for Preschool and Father-Child Communication Scale were used to collect data. The results of the research show a positive and significant relationship between paternal communication and the emotional knowledge/expression and empathy sub-dimensions of the Social-Emotional Skills and Psychological Resilience Scale. Discussions and suggestions were made in line with the findings.

**Keywords:** Father child communication, preschool, psychological resilience, social-emotional skills, well-being

### 1. Introduction

One pivotal stage in our lives is the preschool years. A child's experiences from birth until age six play a vital role in shaping a healthy personality and facilitating positive interactions with their surroundings. During this period, the skills acquired in the realms of social and emotional development not only contribute to a child's ability to establish positive social relationships but also aid in cultivating positive self-esteem, effective expression and regulation of emotions, and adopting a positive perspective, even when confronted with challenging tasks (Kandır & Alpan, 2008; Shoshani & Slone, 2017). All of these factors serve as indicators of well-being and psychological resilience.

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Well-being is closely tied to how we cognitively and emotionally assess our experiences (Lucas & Diener, 2008). It encompasses autonomy, mastery of one's environment, cultivating positive relationships, having a sense of purpose in life, self-acceptance, and being cognizant of one's potential (Dodge, Daly, Huyton & Sanders, 2012). Diener, Oishi, and Lucas (2003) propose that the emotional facet of well-being involves both positive and negative emotions, while the cognitive aspect relates to overall life satisfaction. Well-being, which reflects the presence or absence of positive emotions in one's life, is also associated with concepts like happiness, satisfaction, and positive affect (Diener, 2009). Berridge and Kringelbach (2011) argue that achieving psychological well-being is feasible when individuals know their potential and actively strive for self-fulfillment. According to Diener (2006), the prevalence of negative emotions in an individual can adversely affect their life and impede their overall functionality.

One of the factors that significantly contributes to well-being is social and emotional skills. A child with high level of social and emotional competence is expected to adapt more easily to their environment and navigate through changes with greater ease. Multiple studies in the literature suggest that an enhancement in social and emotional competence positively influences psychological well-being and bolsters psychological resilience (Ergün, 2016; Özkan, 2019; Yıldız & Kahraman, 2021). Demirci and Şar (2017) assert that individuals attuned to their own emotions, attitudes, and motivations tend to exhibit higher levels of psychological well-being, underscoring the impact of self-awareness on psychological well-being. The American Psychological Association (2014) defines psychological resilience as the adaptive process individuals demonstrate when facing difficulties, trauma, tragedy, threats, and risks. Alternatively, psychological resilience can be defined as an individual's capacity to overcome challenges and revert to their previous state of well-being (Garmezy, 1993). Psychological resilience is a developmental construct that evolves over a person's lifetime. Research indicates that psychological resilience is a learned and nurtured personal attribute that develops within a developmental framework (Basım & Çetin, 2010). All these elements significantly influence an individual's quality of life, participation in life activities, and adaptability. Given this information, it is reasonable to assert that social and emotional skills and psychological resilience, positively impact well-being and bolster communication and interaction with one's environment. When discussing social and emotional competence and psychological resilience, it is challenging to separate them from communication.

The nature of a child's social and emotional development is closely related to parent-child interaction. The behaviors of parents aimed at supporting their children's social and emotional development increase their self-confidence, help them grow as creative, independent individuals who can protect their rights, and enable them to develop a personality structure that is collaborative, cooperative, at peace with themselves and their environment, balanced, and harmonious with others (Tarkoçin & Tuzcuoğlu, 2014). Knowing that they are accepted and loved by their parents makes children feel safe (Heritage, Mancini, Rigoli & Piek, 2020). Children who receive positive feedback from their parents regarding social acceptance tend to exhibit positive social behaviors, while in the opposite case, the well-being of children can be negatively affected, leading to the display of undesirable social behaviors (Alto, Handley, Rogosch, Cicchetti & Toth, 2018). Sümer and Şendağ (2009) state that children who feel loved and valued, and develop a secure attachment pattern with their parents tend to have higher self-esteem and maintain their psychological well-being than others. Parents, who play an important role in the development of social and emotional skills (Rutherford, Wallace, Laurent & Mayes, 2015), contribute positively to their children's social and emotional skills by establishing relationships based on acceptance and closeness (Kliewer et al., 2004). A secure parent-child relationship is a prerequisite for children to regulate and express their emotions effectively and to feel supported and emotionally secure (Morris, Criss, Silk & Houlberg, 2017). Studies on parent-child relationships indicate that

children who are rejected by their parents struggle to share their feelings, control them, and generally have pessimistic thoughts about life (Khaleque & Rohner, 2012; Rohner & Britner, 2002; Rohner & Khaleque, 2010). Similarly, Akbağ and Ümmet (2018) state that when parents do not show enough interest in their children and do not create a secure space for them, the level of well-being decreases, and parental attention significantly predicts the well-being of children.

The literature suggests that experiences with our parents in early years affect our behaviors in later years. Attachment theory, widely accepted in terms of meeting basic psychological needs and satisfaction, is one such theory. According to Bowlby (1969), what helps infants learn how to relate to themselves and others is their interactions with parents and others. In the early childhood period, a child's interaction with the caregiver lays the foundation for their first relationships and shapes the individual's adult characteristics during this period. Healthy relationships with children in the early years can only be achieved when the caregiver is sensitive to the child's needs and makes the child feel valued (Zimmermann, 2004).

Many studies focusing on parent-child relationships in early childhood emphasize the importance of the mother-child relationship. The 20th century witnessed cultural changes related to motherhood, with women becoming more active in the workforce, and cultural changes related to parenthood, with fathers being expected to participate more in child-rearing (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb, 2000). Especially in recent years, there has been a noticeable change in the perception of fatherhood and the roles of fathers. Fathers are now seen to be more involved and engaged in childcare than in the past (Churchill & Craig, 2022; Linnenberg, 2012; Stublely, Rojas & McCroy, 2015). Empirical evidence in the literature suggests that babies form attachments to their fathers and that fathers can provide sensitive care to their children (Cabrera, Shannon & Tamis-LeMonda, 2007; Mills-Koonce, Willoughby, Zvara, Barnett, Gustafsson & Cox, 2015). Factors influencing father-child attachment, similar to child development, include establishing healthy communication between the father and the child. Healthy communication with the child positively affects the father's involvement (Palkovitz, 2019). Brown, Mangelsdorf, and Neff (2012) note that father involvement and sensitivity observed at around one year of age are related to secure attachment observed at age three. Factors that enhance father-child attachment include fathers playing with their children (Grossman, Grossmann, Kindler, Scheurer-Englisch & Zimmermann, 2002), establishing emotional closeness with their children, accepting them, greeting them with positive emotions, and making the child feel valued (Krampe, 2009). Similarly, Dyer, Fagan, Kaufman, Pearson, and Cabrera (2018) relate fathers' emotional closeness to their children to the frequency of their contact with them.

At this point, the importance of communication between fathers and children becomes evident. According to Cabrera (2016), fathers are essential for children's development and contribute significantly to child development, both directly and indirectly (Barker, Iles & Ramchandani, 2017; Cabrera, Volling & Barr, 2018; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Insufficient father-child relationships can lead to an insecure attachment pattern between fathers and children; children with an insecure attachment to their fathers tend to have lower self-esteem (Bureau, Deneault & Yurkowski, 2020). Lack of communication between father and child leads to lower life satisfaction in the future (Levin & Currie, 2010). The healthy communication between the father and the child is also related to the child's social and emotional skills and well-being. In this context, evaluating the quality of the parent-child relationship in the early years becomes vital since this type of relationship affects a child's development and subsequent life (Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera & Lamb, 2004).

In the literature, there are various studies indicating that father-child communication positively affects children's development, such as early brain maturation (Bernier, Carlson & Whipple, 2010), cognitive development (Cano, Perales & Baxter, 2019; Rollé, Gullota, Trombetta, Curti,

Gerino, Brustia & Caldarera, 2019), executive function development (Diamond & Lee, 2011; Meuwissen & Carlson, 2015), vocabulary development (Cabrera, Karberg, Malin & Aldoney, 2017), personality development (Turhan, 2018), self-regulation skill development (Özsoy Yanbak, 2019), autonomy, gender identity, morality, and sense of security development (Bureau et al., 2017; Papaleontiou-Louca & Al Omari, 2020), and reducing negative behaviors (Menashe-Grinberg & Atzaba-Poria, 2017), reducing internalizing and externalizing problems (Akgöz Aktaş, 2017).

Longitudinal studies make up the majority of research on fatherhood across the globe (Condon, Corkindale, Boyce & Gamble, 2013; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Grossmann et. al., 2002; Hwang & Lamb, 1997; Ren, Cheung, Boise, Li & Fan, 2020; Rothbaum, Rosen, Pott & Beatty, 1995). In Turkey, it has been observed that this topic has gained importance, especially in the last decade, and research related to fatherhood has focused more on the perception of fatherhood (Aksoy & Tath, 2019; Altın, 2014; Deleş & Kaytez, 2020; Kırığ & Çakır, 2019; Mercan & Şahin, 2017; Telli & Özkan, 2016; Tol & Taşkan, 2018). In Northern Cyprus, however, it has been determined that a limited number of studies have been conducted. These studies are related to fatherhood perception (Gürkan, Ummanel & Koran, 2021), fathers' well-being and psychological resilience (Özbiler, 2020), and fatherhood education programs (Sorakın & Çerkez, 2022). In the literature, various studies are focusing on the impact of father-child communication on children's well-being (Brotherson, Yamamoto & Acock, 2003; Wilson & Prior, 2011) and the development of their social-emotional skill levels (Rosenberg & Wilcox, 2006; Türkoğlu, Çeliköz & Uslu, 2013). However, no study has been found in the literature to determine the relationship between father-child communication and children's social-emotional skills and psychological resilience levels. In this context, this study is believed to contribute to the field.

Furthermore, in Turkey, research on fatherhood is generally limited to specific areas, and there is limited research on father-child communication. Even though in Asia, Europe, and America, such studies have been conducted for a long time, many longitudinal studies have even been carried out. In contrast, in Northern Cyprus, the field is relatively underdeveloped. While research on fatherhood exists worldwide (AÇEV, 2017; Crespi & Ruspini, 2015), traditional views of fatherhood are still prevalent in Northern Cyprus (Gürkan, Ummanel & Koran, 2021). According to this traditional view, fathers are responsible for providing economically for the family and working outside the home. At the same time mothers are responsible for taking care of the house and children (Pontes, Osorio & Alexandrino, 2009). This view restricts father-child communication and assigns the role of taking care of the child to the mother. Although the importance of father-child communication has been demonstrated through research worldwide, the prevalence of traditional fatherhood in Northern Cyprus is thought to threaten family dynamics. Therefore, conducting a study in this regard is considered useful in both understanding the current situation and drawing the attention of authorities. Additionally, it may serve as a reference for increasing father education programs in premarital and family counseling to maintain the balance of dynamics between mothers and fathers. In the creation of healthy societies, healthy families play a significant role. In this sense, it becomes important for family members to have high psychological well-being and resilience levels. It is well known that preschool is a critical period that affects the later years of life. Studies covering early childhood period are important for raising healthy families and a healthy society. Therefore, this study will contribute to the literature in Northern Cyprus in terms of situational analysis.

In this context, the study aims to examine the relationship between preschool children's social-emotional skills and psychological resilience levels and father-child communication. It was also set as a sub-objective to determine whether the variables considered in the study differ according to the demographic characteristics of fathers.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Study Model

This study is designed to examine the relationship between fathers who have children in the preschool period and their communication with their children's social-emotional skills and psychological resilience levels using the quantitative research method of the correlative survey model. This model aims to determine the presence of co-variation between two or more variables. This model, attempts to determine whether the variables change together and, if they do, how they change (Karasar, 2011).

### 2.2. Study Group

A non-probability convenient sampling method was used to expedite the research and reach participants more quickly. In this method, the researcher selects a situation that is close and easily accessible. This sampling method is often used when researchers do not have the opportunity to use other sampling methods (Creswell, 2017; Kılıç, 2013). The data were collected from two different preschool institutions located in two different regions of Northern Cyprus, with the voluntary participation of the participants. A total of 50 fathers who have children aged between three and six participated in the research. After excluding four participants with incomplete or erroneous markings on the data collection instruments, the study was conducted with 46 fathers and their preschool children. Fathers' socio-demographic characteristics are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Distribution of Fathers' Socio-Demographic Characteristics*

| Socio-Demographic Characteristics | Number (n) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Father's Age                      |            |                |
| 29-33 years old                   | 11         | 23.9           |
| 34-38 years old                   | 18         | 39.1           |
| 39-43 years old                   | 11         | 23.9           |
| 44 and above                      | 6          | 13.0           |
| Occupation                        |            |                |
| Civil servant                     | 15         | 32.6           |
| Private sector employee           | 16         | 34.8           |
| Other                             | 15         | 32.6           |
| Educational Status                |            |                |
| Primary-intermediate              | 5          | 10.9           |
| High school                       | 20         | 43.5           |
| University and above              | 21         | 45.7           |
| Child's Age                       |            |                |
| 4 years old                       | 8          | 17.4           |
| 5 years old                       | 22         | 47.8           |
| 6 years old                       | 16         | 34.8           |
| Number of Children                |            |                |
| One                               | 24         | 52.2           |
| Two                               | 21         | 45.7           |
| Three and above                   | 1          | 2.2            |
| Child's Gender                    |            |                |
| Girl                              | 18         | 39.1           |
| Boy                               | 28         | 60.9           |

As seen in Table 1, the fathers who participated in the study were mostly in the age range of 34 to 38. It is observed that 45.7% of the fathers have a university education or higher, 52.2% have one child, and 60.9% have male children, while 47.8% of their children are five years old.

### 2.3. Data Collection Instruments

The Father-Child Communication Scale (FCCS) was used to evaluate father-child communication in the research, and the Social-Emotional Skills and Psychological Resilience Scale (SESPRS) was employed to determine the children's social-emotional skills and psychological resilience levels. Additionally, a personal information form was used to gather participants' demographic information.

**Father-Child Communication Scale (FCCS):** This scale was developed by Ruso, Karagülmez, Uçar, Kaptan, and Şahin-Kıralp (2023) to measure fathers' communication with their children aged three to seven. The scale consists of 10 items and is a 5-point Likert scale. The highest score that can be obtained from the scale is 10, and the lowest score is 50. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale was determined to be 0.91.

**Social-Emotional Skills and Psychological Resilience Scale (SESPRS):** Developed by Ravitch (2013) to assess the positive social-emotional characteristics of preschool children, this scale was adapted to Turkish by Gülay Ogelman, Saraç, Önder, Abanoz, and Akay (2021). The scale consists of a total of 22 items. Teachers evaluate each child on a 4-point Likert scale for each item. The scale includes four sub-dimensions: "Emotion Recognition/Expression," "Empathy," "Self-Regulation," and "Social Competence." The "Emotion Recognition/Expression" sub-dimension involves the child's ability to recognize and express their and others' emotions. The "Empathy" sub-dimension includes caring about others' feelings and trying to help them in the face of problems. The "Self-Regulation" sub-dimension is based on children's ability to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. The "Social Competence" sub-dimension evaluates the child's interpersonal skills in social settings. The Turkish adaptation study calculated the internal consistency coefficients of the scale's sub-dimensions as .90, .91, .84, and .85, respectively. The overall internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found as .95.

### 2.4. Data Collection

In the data collection process, the voluntary participation of fathers and teachers was emphasized. First, the FCCS was sent to the fathers for them to fill out. Then, an informed consent form was sent to these fathers through the preschool institution. After obtaining their consent, teachers filled out the SESPRS for each child.

### 2.5. Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.0 software was used to analyze the research data. In comparing scale scores according to participants' socio-demographic characteristics, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality coefficients of the data set were considered. It was determined that normality was achieved when skewness and kurtosis values were within the range of -1.5 and +1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2009). Accordingly, parametric hypothesis tests such as the Independent Samples t-test and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to compare scale scores according to participants' socio-demographic characteristics. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Test was utilized to examine the relationships between participants' scale scores for the relationship status.

## 2.6. Validity and Reliability

The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was examined in the reliability analysis of the FCCS and SESPRS. In the present study, the Cronbach Alpha reliability for the FCCS was .895, and for the SESPRS, it was .947.

## 2.7. Ethical Approval

All principles required under the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were adhered to in the research. The procedures to be carried out within the scope of the research were approved from an ethical standpoint by the European University of Lefke Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board with decision number BAYEK028.01, dated 08/06/2023.

## 3. Findings

In this section, findings related to the main objective and sub-objectives of the study are presented. Descriptive statistics for the variables are provided in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*FCCS and SESPRS Scores*

| Scale and Sub-scales | N  | Min.  | Max.  | x     | s     |
|----------------------|----|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| FCCS                 | 46 | 37.00 | 50.00 | 45.56 | 4.395 |
| SESPRS               | 46 | 53.00 | 88.00 | 79.30 | 9.914 |
| Emotion Recognition  | 46 | 13.00 | 24.00 | 21.84 | 3.069 |
| Empathy              | 46 | 10.00 | 20.00 | 17.60 | 3.029 |
| Self-Regulation      | 46 | 9.00  | 24.00 | 20.82 | 3.743 |
| Social Competence    | 46 | 14.00 | 20.00 | 19.02 | 1.731 |

As seen in Table 2, fathers included in the study obtained an average score of  $45.56 \pm 4.39$  on the FCCS. Based on this data, it can be said that fathers participating in the research had a positive level of communication with their children.

Children scored an average of  $21.84 \pm 3.069$  on the "Emotion Recognition" sub-dimension, an average of  $17.60 \pm 3.029$  on the "Empathy" sub-dimension, an average of  $20.82 \pm 3.743$  on the "Self-Regulation" sub-dimension, an average of  $19.02 \pm 1.731$  on the "Social Competence" sub-dimension, and finally, an average of  $79.30 \pm 9.914$  on the overall SESPRS. It can be concluded that both the total and sub-dimension scores are above average, indicating that the children of the fathers who participated in the study have high levels of social-emotional skills and psychological resilience.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare FCCS scores with fathers' ages, education levels, number of children, children's ages, and occupations. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3***Comparison of FCCS Scores According to Fathers' Demographic Characteristics*

| Scale              | Variables       | n                    | x     | ss    | F    | p     |      |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------|-------|------|-------|------|
| FCCS               | Fathers' Age    | 29-33                | 11    | 45.63 | 4.12 | .345  | .710 |
|                    |                 | 34-38                | 18    | 45.22 | 5.21 |       |      |
|                    |                 | 39-43                | 11    | 45.27 | 4.05 |       |      |
|                    |                 | 44-and above         | 6     | 47.00 | 3.34 |       |      |
|                    | Education level | Primary-intermediate | 5     | 42.60 | 3.64 | 1.599 | .214 |
|                    |                 | High school          | 20    | 45.40 | 3.90 |       |      |
|                    |                 | University and above | 21    | 46.42 | 4.77 |       |      |
|                    | Occupation      | Civil servant        | 15    | 45.20 | 4.55 | 1.152 | .325 |
|                    |                 | Private sector       | 16    | 44.62 | 4.54 |       |      |
|                    |                 | Other                | 15    | 46.93 | 4.00 |       |      |
|                    | Child age       | 4                    | 8     | 46.75 | 3.01 | .345  | .710 |
|                    |                 | 5                    | 22    | 45.36 | 5.25 |       |      |
|                    |                 | 6                    | 16    | 45.25 | 3.76 |       |      |
| Number of Children | 1               | 24                   | 45.20 | 4.37  | .188 | .829  |      |
|                    | 2               | 21                   | 45.90 | 4.59  |      |       |      |
|                    | 3 and above     | 1                    | 47.00 |       |      |       |      |

As shown in Table there is no statistically significant difference FCCS scores among fathers of different ages [ $F_{(2-43)} = 0.35, p > .05$ ], education levels [ $F_{(2-43)} = 1.60, p > .05$ ], occupations [ $F_{(2-43)} = 1.15, p > .05$ ], children's ages [ $F_{(2-43)} = 1.35, p > .05$ ] or the number of children they have [ $F_{(2-43)} = 0.19, p > .05$ ]. Therefore, regardless of fathers' ages, education levels, occupations, children's ages, or the number of children they have, FCCS scores are similar, and these demographic factors do not seem to affect father-child communication.

One-way ANOVA was conducted to compare SESPRS total scores with fathers' ages, education levels, occupations, children's ages, and the number of children they have. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4***Comparison of Fathers' Demographic Characteristics and SESPRS Scores*

| Scale  | Variables       | N                    | x  | ss    | F      | p     |      |
|--------|-----------------|----------------------|----|-------|--------|-------|------|
| SESPRS | Father's Age    | 29-33                | 11 | 75.90 | 13.902 | .608  | .613 |
|        |                 | 34-38                | 18 | 80.55 | 8.262  |       |      |
|        |                 | 39-43                | 11 | 79.45 | 8.835  |       |      |
|        |                 | 44-and above         | 6  | 81.50 | 8.549  |       |      |
|        | Education Level | Primary-intermediate | 5  | 73.40 | 14.501 | 2.286 | .114 |
|        |                 | High school          | 20 | 77.60 | 10.485 |       |      |
|        |                 | University and above | 21 | 82.33 | 7.309  |       |      |
|        | Occupation      | Civil servant        | 15 | 83.66 | 8.941  | 2.899 | .066 |
|        |                 | Private sector       | 16 | 75.43 | 9.472  |       |      |
|        |                 | Other                | 15 | 79.06 | 10.116 |       |      |

**Table 4 (continued)***Comparison of Fathers' Demographic Characteristics and SESPRS Scores*

| Scale  | Variables          | N           | x  | ss    | F      | p     |      |
|--------|--------------------|-------------|----|-------|--------|-------|------|
| SESPRS | Child Age          | 4           | 8  | 76.62 | 12.783 | 1.064 | .354 |
|        |                    | 5           | 22 | 81.50 | 7.896  |       |      |
|        |                    | 6           | 16 | 77.62 | 10.837 |       |      |
|        | Number of Children | 1           | 24 | 77.87 | 9.966  | .590  | .559 |
|        |                    | 2           | 21 | 81.04 | 10.052 |       |      |
|        |                    | 3 and above | 1  | 77.00 |        |       |      |

As seen in Table 4, there is no statistically significant difference in SESPRS total scores among fathers of different ages [ $F_{(2-43)}=0.68, p>.05$ ], education level [ $F_{(2-43)}=2.29, p>.05$ ], occupation [ $F_{(2-43)}=2.90, p>.05$ ], child's age [ $F_{(2-43)}=1.06, p>.05$ ] or the number of children they have [ $F_{(2-43)}=0.59, p>.05$ ]. According to that, children's social-emotional skills and psychological resilience scores are similar regardless of fathers' ages, education levels, occupations, ages, or the number of children they have. In other words, these demographic variables do not impact children's social-emotional skills and psychological resilience.

T-test results to determine whether there is a difference in FCCS and SESPRS scores based on the children's gender are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5***Comparison of FCCS and SESPRS Scores According to Children's Gender*

| Scale  | Variables | N  | x     | ss     | t    | p    |
|--------|-----------|----|-------|--------|------|------|
| FCCS   | Girl      | 18 | 45.61 | 4.434  | .056 | .955 |
|        | Boy       | 28 | 45.53 | 4.451  |      |      |
| SESPRS | Girl      | 18 | 77.72 | 11.049 | .865 | .392 |
|        | Boy       | 28 | 80.32 | 9.177  |      |      |

As shown in Table 5, there is no statistically significant difference in FCCS scores [ $t_{(44)}=0.056, p>.05$ ] or SESPRS scores [ $t_{(44)}=0.87, p>.05$ ] based on children's gender. This indicates that children's scores are similar, and whether a child is a boy or a girl does not appear to make a difference in father-child communication or the children's resilience scores.

Correlation results between the sub-dimensions of FCCS and SESPRS are provided in Table 6.

**Table 6***Correlation Between FCCS and SDBPRS Sub-Dimension Scores*

| Scale | Correlation | Emotion Recognition | Empathy | Self-Regulation | Social Competence |
|-------|-------------|---------------------|---------|-----------------|-------------------|
| FCCS  | R           | .435*               | .292*   | .190            | .188              |
|       | P           | .003                | .049    | .206            | .211              |
|       | N           | 46                  | 46      | 46              | 46                |

As seen in Table 6, there is a positive and significant correlation between "Emotion Recognition" ( $r=0.435$ ) and "Empathy" ( $r=0.292$ ) sub-dimensions of SESPRS and FCCS. As father-child communication improves, children's ability to recognize and express emotions and their empathy skills also increase. In other words, as communication between fathers and children increases,

children become more aware of their own and others' emotions and show more significant consideration for others' feelings.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The research results indicate a high level of communication between the fathers and their children who participated in the study. Similar studies in the literature have also emphasized the positive evaluation of father-child communication (Bueno, Vieira, Crepaldi & Faraco, 2019), while some studies have observed low levels of father-child communication (Coley & Morris, 2004; Tutkun & Tezel Şahin, 2016).

Interestingly, the research results demonstrate that fathers' ages, education levels, occupations, children's ages, children's gender, and the number of children does not lead to any significant differences in father-child communication. This result contradicts some previous studies in the literature, highlighting the impact of demographic characteristics on father-child communication and paternal involvement. In these studies, factors such as a father's age, the number of children he has, the child's gender (Akgöz Aktaş, 2017), education level (Uzun & Baran, 2019), socioeconomic status (Karaca, Kaya & Can Yaşar, 2019), and occupation (Gözübüyük & Özbey, 2020) have been found to influence the quality of communication between fathers and children.

Furthermore, at the end of the research, it was found that the children of the participating fathers exhibited high levels of social-emotional skills and psychological resilience. This result aligns with some prior studies examining the social skills of preschool children, which have reported high levels of social skill development (Özyürek, 2015) that tend to increase with age (Karoğlu & Ünüvar, 2017). However, there have also been studies suggesting lower levels of social skills in children (Erten, 2012). Additionally, Gülay Ogelman and Kahveci (2023) identified a dynamic relationship between changes in social skill levels and well-being. Studies focusing on preschool children's well-being and psychological resilience have shown that children have high levels of well-being and psychological resilience, and some social skills predict well-being and psychological resilience (Özbey, Erata & Yavuz, 2022).

The research results also indicate that fathers' ages, education levels, occupations, children's ages, children's gender, and the number of children does not lead to any significant differences in children's social-emotional skills and psychological resilience. While some studies in the literature support this results (Atmaca, Gültekin Akduman & Şepitci Sarıbaş, 2020), other studies have reported that as a father's age increases, the child's anger and aggression levels decrease (Liman, 2020), higher education levels are associated with improvements in a child's social skills (Pekdoğan, 2016), a father's occupation affects children's social skills, especially in sub-dimensions related to social interaction (Yaşar Ekici, 2015), girls tend to have higher levels of social skills and competence compared to boys (Liman, 2020), and there is a significant difference between the number of children a father has and the social skill levels of the children (Temel & Türkoğlu, 2019).

In conclusion, this study reveals a significant relationship between children's social-emotional skills, psychological resilience, and father-child communication. The continuity and quality of communication between fathers and children, as suggested by Abanoz, Gülay Ogelman, and Saraç (2022), is found to influence children's social and emotional competencies. Additionally, high-quality communication between fathers and children is believed to be a positive form of social support, potentially enhancing psychological resilience. Indeed, research suggests that father-child communication plays a crucial role in shaping a child's social skills (Attili, Vermigli & Roazzi, 2010; Webster, Low, Siller & Hackett, 2013; Fernandes et al., 2020). It is evident that as

the level of communication by fathers increases, children's social skill levels tend to improve (Kygeęiz & zbey, 2019), and fathers' warm and affectionate behaviors toward their children predict their social skills (Glay, 2011). Similarly, research supports the notion that father-child communication influences children's psychological resilience (Tamura, 2019), and a lack of father-child communication is associated with weaker psychological resilience (Tatarer, 2020; Zhou, Lv, Yang & Wang, 2021).

Another significant result from this study is the positive and meaningful relationship between father-child communication and children's ability to express their emotions and exhibit empathy. Existing literature also supports the idea that expressing emotions and having empathy skills enhances communication (Akduman, Karahan & Solmaz, 2018; Gl, 2017; Gl & Gney, 2019; Pelit, Karaęor & Kılıę, 2018). Furthermore, increased children's reactivity, sensory sensitivity, and emotional responsiveness positively enhance father-child communication (Arabacı, zyrek & Gzn Kahraman, 2022).

Considering the stages of family and child development, it is essential to prioritize efforts to strengthen psychological well-being during the early years. In this context, it is recommended to focus on studies and interventions within the framework of parenting schools, addressing both communication and direct paternal involvement to enhance father-child communication. While there is abundant research on mother-child relationships and communication in the literature, the relative lack of emphasis on father-child communication is apparent. Therefore, increasing research efforts focused on the positive impacts of father-child relationships and paternal involvement on children is crucial. Future studies could further deepen our understanding by incorporating mothers' perceptions of fathers' parenting roles and fathers' well-being into the analysis, allowing for a more comprehensive and multidimensional exploration of the topic. Given that communication is a bidirectional process and has the potential to influence and be influenced by psychological resilience, comprehensive mixed-methods research examining the mutual relationship between paternal and child psychological resilience and communication skills is recommended for gaining multifaceted insights. Additionally, interviews with children, teachers, mothers, and fathers will help eliminate the limitations associated with relying solely on teacher perspectives and provide a multi-dimensional understanding of psychological resilience and father-child communication. Finally, this study was conducted with a limited sample size and future research with larger samples and longitudinal designs is expected to make valuable contributions to the field.

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### **Ethical Approval**

All principles required under the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were adhered to in the research. The procedures to be carried out within the scope of the research were approved from an ethical standpoint by the European University of Lefke Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board with decision number BAYEK028.01, dated 08/06/2023.