

## INVESTIGATION OF THE FATHERS' TIME SPENDING TOGETHER WITH THEIR CHILDREN

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### **Abstract**

*Fathers taking a more active role in raising children have positive effects on the child's social, emotional, mental, sexual identity, and personality development. This study examined the situation of fathers' whose children are between three and six years old, spending time with their children. The participants of the study consisted of 848 fathers whose children are between three and six years old. "Personal Information Form" and "The Form for Determining the Situation of Spending Time with the Child" developed by the researcher were used as data collection tools. The data were collected through the internet. Obtained data were analyzed with T-Test, Anova, and  $\chi^2$  tests. According to the findings, it was seen that socioeconomic level affects the father's spending time with the child, and fathers with high income spend more time with their children than fathers with low income. The educational level of the father also affects the level of spending time with the child. As the educational level increases, the level of the fathers' spending time with their child increases in direct proportion. An inversely proportional relationship was found between the number of children and the time spent with the child. It was understood that fathers with fewer children spent more time with their children. In addition, older fathers spend less time with their children than younger fathers. It was concluded that the level of fathers spending time with their children did not differ significantly according to the gender of the child.*

**Keywords:** *Father involvement, father-child relationship, child development, three and six year-old children , paternity role*

## **Introduction**

Preschool period is one of the most critical periods in an individual's life. During this time, the child wonders, explores, discovers, learns (Güleç, 2010), begins to communicate with the people around him, and develops social skills. Parents are the first people with whom the child has his first experiences, has his first learnings and he communicates. Since the parents constitute the closest environment of the child from the moment of birth, the interaction of both mother and father with the child affects all areas of the child's development. Any intervention by the parents impacts the future of the child (Taşkın, 2011). Although the roles of mother and father meet at a common point for the child, these roles are defined differently in the context of social perception. In the context of gender roles, while the mother is held primarily responsible for the care and upbringing of the child, the father is mostly held responsible for earning money to meet the needs of the home and stays in background in raising the child. While the mother actively raises the child, the father stays out of the process. The main emphasis on the word "parent" has been mostly on mothers recently (Taşkın, 2011). This situation is also reflected in the study. While there are many studies examining the mother-child relationship, there are very few studies that examine the father-child relationship. Most of these studies found that information was obtained indirectly through the mothers rather than directly from the father.

Today, families have also been affected by the benefits of globalization, urbanization and industrialization (Demircioğlu, Tezel Şahin, & Günindi, 2011). The roles of mother and father in the family have changed. In retrospect, women are seen as the ones who run a house and take care of the babies, while fathers are regarded as the ones who earn a living and make money. Social and economic changes influenced the roles of parents and domestic division of labour (Evans, 1996; Almak, 2004). It could be seen that this change was mainly in the area of housework and childcare. Due to the increasing workload and responsibilities of the mother, the need for the father's support in housework and childcare increased. The fact that the mother has to return to working life shortly after giving birth has broken the notion that the mother is responsible for the care of the

baby. This led to fathers taking a more important position in baby care and raising children (Karayılmaz, 2020).

The figure “father” in the child's life positively affects the child's development in different areas. It is seen that the basic mental and academic skills, language skills and psychosocial adaptation skills of children who are taken care of by their fathers show more development (Ishii-Kuntz, 1995). The father's active interaction with the child affects the child's analytical thinking structure, communication skills and problem solving skills. Thus, the child can exhibit independent behaviors (Bekman, 2001). In addition, it was seen that fathers, who take care of their children, had less problematic behavior in the study conducted by Kimmet (2003). It was observed that fathers who interact with their babies one-to-one, establish positive bonds with their babies and that babies greet them with joy and excitement when they come back from work (Lamb, 2001). In other studies, babies show secure attachment if fathers take care of their babies (Notaro & Volling, 1999), regulate of negative emotions in the first childhood (Davidov & Grusec, 2006), exhibit higher self-perception in the second childhood (Amato, 1987), and have success in school in adolescence (Ramirez-Valles, Zimmerman & Juarez, 2002). It was observed that preschool children who attract attention from their fathers had a higher level of school readiness and adapt to the school environment more easily than children who do not attract attention from their fathers (Pruett, 2000). These children were more successful in coping with the problems experienced in school.

When fathers take on the role of active paternity, they can positively affect all developmental areas of their children. Fathers, who meet the physical needs of the child such as care, nutrition, cleaning, and social needs such as playing and friendship, and support the development of their children, lay the foundations of a strong relationship with their children. Spending time with the child also helps the father to learn more about his child personally and developmentally and to get to know him closely (Lamb, 2001). This study was planned to reveal the situation of fathers' whose children are between three and six years old, spending time with their children

## **METHOD**

### **Study Model**

This study is a survey model, which was conducted to examine the time spent with their children by fathers who have children between three and six years old. The data ob-

tained with this study model are classified, summarized, interpreted and presented according to predetermined themes. A cause and effect relationship is established between the findings and comparisons are made between the phenomena. In this study, no effort is made to influence or change the views of the individuals who are the subject of the study (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2008).

### **Participants**

The participants of the study consisted of 848 volunteer fathers whose children are between three and six years old. The demographic information of the participants was given in Table 1.

**Table 1 The demographic Information of the Participants**

		s	%
Gender of child	Female		402
	Male		446
		47,4	52,6
Number of child	1	308	36,3
	2	414	48,8
	3 and above	126	14,9
Father's age	20-30 years old	132	15,6
	31-40 years old	564	66,5
	41 years old and older	152	17,9
Income status	Low level	392	46,2
	High level	456	53,8
Educational level	Literate	36	4,2
	High school graduate and below	356	41,9
	Bachelor degree	414	48,8
	Master's degree	78	9,2

### **Data Collection Tools**

The data of the study were obtained by using the "Personal Information Form" and "The Form for Determining the Situation of Spending Time with the Child" prepared by the researcher.

#### **Personal Information Form**

In this form, there are information about the age of the father participating in the study, monthly income, educational level, number of children, and gender of the child.

#### **The Form for Determining the Situation of Spending Time with the Child**

In the form, there are questions prepared to determine the situation of fathers' spending time with their children. These questions are; the time spent with the child during the

day, whether fathers find the time spent with the child sufficient or not, if children want to spend more time, how do they show this desire ?, if the father thinks that he does not spend enough time with the child, what factor/factors prevent him from spending time with the child ? and activities with children.

After the Father Interview Form was prepared, a preliminary interview was conducted with five fathers in order to test the form. The form was put into final form in line with the interview results.

### **Data Collection**

The data were collected on the internet. The questions of "Personal Information Form" and "The Form for Determining the Situation of Spending Time with the Child" were transferred to the survey portal and a survey link was created. The survey link was sent to the fathers via their social media accounts.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The ways and frequency of fathers' spending time with their children were shown in Table 2. According to this table, 75.2% of fathers chat with their children every day. Chatting is the way of fathers' spending time. Another way of spending time with children is playing games with 51.7%. 64.4% of the fathers stated that they never do activities to visit cultural places such as museums with their children, and 42.5% of the fathers stated that they never do sports with their children.

**Table 2 Information on the Activities that Fathers with Three and Six Year-old Children Do with their Children**

Activities		n	%
Chatting	Never	42	5,0
	Seldom	86	10,1
	Often	82	9,7
	Every day	638	75,2
Listening to Music, Singing etc.	Never	178	21,0
	Seldom	306	36,1
	Often	138	16,3
	Every day	226	26,7
Playing Game	Never	38	4,5
	Seldom	194	22,9
	Often	178	21,0
	Every day	438	51,7
Reading Books, Telling Tales etc.	Never	302	35,6
	Seldom	332	39,2
	Often	126	14,9
	Every day	88	10,4
Doing Sport	Never	360	42,5
	Seldom	316	37,3
	Often	76	9,0
	Every day	96	11,3
Going to the Cinema/Theatre etc.	Never	278	32,8

	Seldom	394	46,5
	Often	70	8,3
	Every day	106	12,5
Visiting Cultural Sites such as Museum etc.	Never	564	64,4
	Seldom	302	35,6
Activities related to nature	Never	178	21,0
	Seldom	554	65,3
	Often	70	8,3
	Every day	46	5,4
Housework	Never	226	26,7
	Seldom	316	37,3
	Often	96	11,3
	Every day	210	24,8
Drawing a picture-Painting etc.	Never	198	23,3
	Seldom	424	50,0
	Often	102	12,0
	Every day	124	14,6
Doing Shopping	Never	112	13,2
	Seldom	656	77,4
	Often	50	5,9
	Every day	30	3,5

Table 3 shows how much time fathers spend with their children in a day. According to this study, 3.5% of fathers spend no time with their children while 21.9% of them spend less than 30 minutes with their children. The rest of fathers spend time with their children between 1 hour and 3 hours (and more) in a day. While 62.5% of the fathers do not find the time spent with the child enough, 37.5% of them find it enough. Considering the reasons why fathers could not spare enough time for their children, 53.5% of them stated that they had a busy life, 12.3% did not know how to spend time with the child, 6.8% stated that it was the mother's duty to take care of the child, and 4.2% did not enjoy spending time with the child.

**Table 3 The Time Fathers Spend with Their Children in a Day**

The time father spend with their children	n	%
I can not spare time for my child		30
	3,5	
less than 30 minutes	186	21,9
1 hour	230	27,1
2 hours	212	25,0
3 hours or more	190	22,4
Total	848	100

In the study conducted by Gürşimşek et al. (2007), it was seen that fathers who spend more time with their children took a more active role in their children's lives, made more attempts to contribute to their children's development, and were satisfied with it. Aksoy and Tatlı (2019) concluded that fathers who spend more time with their children established better relationships with their children, and this relationship positively af-

affected the fathers in terms of paternity. In the study conducted by Türkoğlu, Çeliköz, and Uslu (2013) to determine fathers' perception of quality time, the majority of fathers participating in the study stated that while they spared less time than one hour for their children on weekdays, they spared two hours or more on weekends. In the study conducted by Aytekin et al. (2016), how parents spend time with their children was compared and it was concluded that fathers played and chatted with their children more than mothers, but spent less time with them. Studies conducted by Paquette (2004) showed that children and their fathers mostly preferred fighting games such as wrestling and grappling, and risk-taking games.

It was seen that the results of the studies obtained as a result of the literature review and the research findings obtained were consistent with each other. Fathers who spend more time with their children find the time sufficient while fathers who spend less time with their children do not find this time sufficient. The reason for this situation can be shown as fathers who spend more time with their children take a more active role in their children's lives and develop more positive relationships (Lamb, 2010) and increase paternal satisfaction (Aksoy & Tatlı, 2019).

When fathers could not spare enough time for their children, most of the children wanted to spend more time with their fathers. While 42.9% of the children showed their wishes by speaking, 49.1% of them showed it with their behaviors.

**Table 4 Children's Expressions of a Desire to Spend Time With Their Fathers**

Expressing a desire to spend time	n	%
My children make no such request	70	
8,3		
Children indicate a desire to spend time verbally.	362	
42,7		
Children demonstrate a desire to spend time through their behavior.	416	
49,1		
Total	848	
100		

The Independent T-Test was conducted to determine whether fathers' spending time with their children showed a significant difference depending on the child's gender, and the results of the analysis revealed that the fathers' spending time with their children did not differ significantly depending on the child's gender.

In line with the results of the study, Uzun and Baran (2015) concluded in their study that gender was not a determining factor in the father-child relationship. In similar studies that investigated the father-child relationship and interaction (Sımsıkı & Şendil 2014; İzci, 2013; Arabacı & Ömeroğlu, 2013; Türkoğlu & Akduman, 2016), it was determined that the variable of gender did not affect the father-child relationship and interaction. Parke (1996), on the other hand, concluded in his study that fathers tended to spend more time with their sons than with their daughters. In other studies examining the father-child relationships (Goldberg & Easterbrooks, 1984; Aldaus et al., 1998; Harris & Morgan, 1991), it was concluded that fathers spent more time with their sons and played a more active role in their lives. The reason of inconsistency in the study findings may be cultural and time factors. Sexist approaches to child raising are evolving today and father is important in the child's life (Sımsıkı & Şendil, 2014).

The results of the analysis on whether the situation of fathers' with three and six year-old children spending time with their children show a significant difference according to socioeconomic level was determined by Independent T-Test and it turned out that there was a statistically significant difference between fathers' spending time with their children and their socioeconomic level. In this regard, the income level had an impact on the fathers' spending time and fathers' with higher income spending more time with their children, and this difference was statistically significant.

In their study, Danziger and Radin (1990) concluded that socioeconomic level influenced fathers' spending time with their children, and fathers with higher welfare level spent more time with their young children and established better quality relationships. In other studies on fathers' spending time with their children (Gerson, 1993; Şahin & Demiriz, 2014; Arabacı & Ömeroğlu, 2013), it was observed that fathers devoted more time to their children and built stronger relationships as their buying power increased. The findings of this study and the results obtained from related literature reviews were consistent with each other. The income level of fathers influences the time they spend with their children. It was understood that fathers with a high income level could spend more time with their children, while fathers with a low income level could spend less time with their children. The reason for this situation can be that fathers with a low socioeconomic income level work more to earn a living (Arabacı & Ömeroğlu, 2013) so they can spend less time with their children. Furthermore, fathers' who have financial



difficulties due to the low income level experiencing stress and stress-related anger attacks, having problems in family relationships, and their staying out of home environment (Elder et al., 1992) may result in spending less time with their children. Another reason is that the patriarchal structure and traditional attitudes toward raising child are more prevalent in low-income and slum-dwelling families than in high-income families. Accordingly, the mother is held responsible for the care of the child and the father does not take an active role in childcare even when he is at home (Kuruçırak, 2010).

Whether there is a significant difference between the situation of fathers' with three and six year-old children spending time with their children and the father's educational level was determined using the ANOVA test and the results of the analysis were shown in Table 10 below.

**Table 5 ANOVA Test Results of the Relationship Between Fathers' Spending Time with Their Children and Educational Levels**

Educational levels	s	$\bar{x}$	ss	F	p
Literate	36	20,22	5,63	19,565	
High school graduate and below	320	23,06	5,66		
Bachelor's Degree	414	26,18	5,52		
Master Degree		78	28,71	5,64	

$p < 0.05$

When the fathers' spending time with their children was compared according to their educational level in Table 5, it was seen that there was a significant difference between educational levels. TUKEY test was carried out to determine between which groups this difference was. As a result of the test, it was concluded that the level of fathers' spending time with their child increased as the fathers' educational level increased.

In the study conducted by Şahin and Demiriz (2014) on father participation, it was concluded that as the educational level increased, fathers' involvement also increased. In Ünüvar's (2008) study on fathers' spending time with their children, it was found that fathers who have bachelor's and master degree spent more time with their children and spent more quality time with them. In other studies on father-child relationship and fathers' involvement (Simsıkı & Şendil, 2014; Tezel Şahin & Özbey, 2009; Kuruçırak, 2010), it was concluded that fathers spent more time with their children as their educational level increased. According to Coltrane (1995) and Tomul (2008), it was seen that as the fathers' educational level increased, they perceived themselves as more compe-

tent in child development and education, and were more willing to take responsibility for the child's care.

The findings of this study and the studies obtained from the literature reviews were consistent. Educational level has an impact on fathers' spending time with their children and, fathers with a high educational level can spend more time with their children while fathers with a low educational level can spend less time with their children. Therefore, fathers with higher educational level are more sensitive about child development and child education (Aksoy & Tatlı, 2019), and their competence and positive attitudes towards paternity are higher (Seçer et al., 2007). Fathers' attitudes toward raising child shift away from traditionalism as their educational level increases and accordingly, they spend more time with their children (Dizman, 2003).

Whether there is a significant difference between the situation of fathers' with three and six year-old children spending time with their children and the number of their children was determined using the ANOVA test and the results of the analysis were shown in Table 11 below.

**Table 6 ANOVA Test results of the relationship between fathers' spending time with their children and the number of their children**

Number of Children	s	$\bar{x}$	ss	F
One child	308	26,22	6,05	8,207
Two children	414	24,75	5,71	
Three or more children	126	22,74	5,81	

$p < 0.05$

Table 6 showed that when the fathers' spending time with their children was compared with the number of children, there was a significant difference between the groups. TUKEY test was carried out to determine between which groups this difference was. As a result of the test, it was concluded that the time spent with the child increased as the number of children decreased.

Sımsıkı and Şendil (2014) concluded that the number of children influenced fathers' attentions. In other studies (Mehall et al., 2009; İzci, 2013), it was concluded that as the number of children increased, the amount of time the father devotes to his child decreased. The findings of this study and the studies obtained from the literature review

showed consistency. The number of children who fathers have affects the time they spend with their children. Fathers with fewer children can devote more time to their children than fathers with more children. The reason for this situation is the fact that the father devotes time to each of his children, and therefore, as the number of children increases, the time which fathers devote to the child decreases (Pekel Uludağlı, 2017).

Whether there is a significant difference between fathers' spending time with their children and their age were determined using the ANOVA Test, and the results of the analysis were shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7 ANOVA Test Results of the Relationship Between Fathers' Spending Time with Their Children and Their Age**

Father's age	s	$\bar{x}$	ss	F
20-30 years	132	26,06	5,17	4,083
31-40 years	564	25,17	6,01	
41 years and above	152	23,36	6,10	

$p < 0.05$

When the fathers' spending time with their children was compared in Table 7, it was seen that there was a significant difference between the groups. In the TUKEY test, which was performed to determine between which groups this difference was, it was found that the father's spending time with the child increased as the age group decreased.

Ünlü (2010) concluded in his study that older fathers spent less time with their children than younger fathers. Seçer et al. (2007) concluded in their study that 35 years-old fathers and below showed more interest and devoted more time to their children compared to 36 years-old fathers and above. The findings of the relevant studies and the findings of the study conducted were consistent with each other. The father's age is a factor that influences the time spent with the child. Young fathers can devote more time to their children, while older fathers can devote less time to their children. Seçer (2007) explains the reason for this situation with the fact that men can only achieve success in their professional careers once they reach middle age under the conditions of the country, and therefore, their interest in paternity decreases. The increase in the number of children at an advanced age and thus the decrease in the amount of time that the father

can devote to the child can be shown as another reason. Gürşimşek (2008), on the other hand, stated that father's age had an impact on parenting attitudes, that older fathers had more traditional attitudes towards raising child than younger fathers, and therefore devoted less time to their children.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examined fathers', who have children between three and six years old, spending time with their children. The findings of this study showed that the fathers' spending time with their children did not make a significant difference depending on the gender of the child. It was understood that fathers' spending time with their children varied depending on the father's age, socioeconomic level, educational level, and number of children, and fathers with higher income and educational level spent more time with their children. It was concluded that fathers with fewer children spent more time with their children. The study revealed that young fathers spent more time with their children than older fathers.

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