| Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi|

# Do Father Support Programmes Make A Difference? Examination of the Father Involvement Roles

## Baba Destek Programları Fark Yaratır mı? Baba Katılım Rollerinin İncelenmesi[1]

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**Abstract**

*Purpose:* The purpose of this study is to examine why fathers who participated in the father support programme organised by Mother Child Education Foundation (MCEF) participated in the programme, the change in their views regarding father involvement roles, and their suggestions for the programme.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The research is in the qualitative research model and designed in case study method. The criterion sampling method was used to determine the study group of the research. The sampling of this study consisted of 12 fathers who regularly attended the Father Support Programme conducted in a kindergarten in Derince district of Kocaeli province in the 2019-2020 academic year. In the study the data obtained through a semi-structured interview form were analysed through the content analysis method.

*Findings:* According to research findings, participants took part in the programme to establish a close relationship, gain proper parental attitudes, and receive emotional support. The participant father views regarding father involvement and the change in their practices were examined in five categories: Interactive togetherness, accessibility, responsibility, empathic approach, and democratic attitude. In line with the study outcomes. The suggestions of the participants were demonstrated at the micro and macro levels. At the micro-level, it was indicated that the parents should attend such support programmes together, and families with different parental attitudes should be reached. At the macro-level, the integration of this school-run organisation into the educational curriculum and its spread through non-governmental organisations and municipalities are included.

*Highlights: It* was recommended that the father support programmes should be disseminated in schools and supported by the local authorities. For the dissemination of the training activities, studies can be carried out in universities for the prospective teachers to allow them to meet the Father Support Programme and the Ministry of National Education can take steps to support the teachers that are competent in family involvement programmes to apply these activities in their classrooms and schools.

**Öz**

Çalışmanın amacı: Bu çalışmanın amacı, Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı (MCEF) tarafından düzenlenen baba destek programına katılan babaların programa neden katıldıklarını, baba katılım rollerine ilişkin görüşlerinin değişimini ve programa yönelik önerilerini incelemektir.

Materyal ve Yöntem: Araştırma nitel araştırma modelinde olup durum çalışması yöntemiyle tasarlanmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu belirlemek için ölçüt örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu araştırmanın örneklemini 2019-2020 eğitim öğretim yılında Kocaeli ili Derince ilçesinde bir anaokulunda yürütülen Baba Destekleme Programına düzenli olarak katılan 12 baba oluşturmuştur. Araştırmada yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu aracılığıyla elde edilen veriler içerik analizi yöntemiyle çözümlenmiştir.

Bulgular: Araştırma bulgularına göre, katılımcılar yakın ilişki kurmak, uygun ebeveyn tutumları kazanmak ve duygusal destek almak için programa katılmışlardır. Katılımcı babaların baba katılımına ve uygulamalarındaki değişime ilişkin görüşleri, etkileşimli birliktelik, erişilebilirlik, sorumluluk, empatik yaklaşım ve demokratik tutum olmak üzere beş kategoride incelenmiştir. Çalışma sonuçları doğrultusunda katılımcıların önerileri, mikro ve makro düzeyde ortaya konmuştur. Mikro düzeyde, anne babaların bu tür destek programlarına birlikte katılmaları ve farklı anne baba tutumlarına sahip ailelere ulaşılması gerektiği belirtilmiştir. Makro düzeyde ise okul tarafından gerçekleştirilen bu programın eğitim müfredatına entegrasyonu ve sivil toplum kuruluşları ve belediyeler aracılığıyla yaygınlaştırılması önerilmiştir.

Önemli Vurgular: Okullarda baba destek programlarının yaygınlaştırılması ve yerel yönetimler tarafından desteklenmesi baba katılım rollerinin önemini ortaya koyabilir. Eğitim faaliyetlerinin yaygınlaştırılması için üniversitelerde öğretmen adaylarının Baba Destek Programı ile tanışmalarına yönelik çalışmalar yapılabilir ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı aile katılım programları konusunda yetkin olan öğretmenlerin başvuru yapmasına destek olacak adımlar atabilir.

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## INTRODUCTION

The school-family relationship starts in the preschool period, and this relationship has the potential to shape the school perceptions of the children and families in time. Families represent the first essential source for their learning and development as a lifelong resource to children (Jeynes, 2014; Downer & Myers, 2010). Studies show that family involvement contributes to student achievement significantly (Epstein, 2010; Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Larocque, Kleiman & Darling, 2011; Taylor, Clayton & Rowley, 2004; Wilder, 2014). The new conception of the role of the family in child education has recently transformed into a school-family-community partnership model that is more comprehensive than limited family involvement (Epstein, 2010). Family involvement refers to participating in the educational activities of children to support their academic and social well-being (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005). While Epstein (2005) explains family involvement as a kind of school and classroom organisation where educators and families share responsibilities to ensure the learning and success of children, McClelland and Morrison (2003) specify it as the involvement of families in the educational process to support the education and development of their children positively. Thus, family involvement which includes practices such as helping children with their homework, communicating with teachers, and catering to school, contribute to the positive development of many skills in the early childhood period. Therefore, family involvement emphasises a key component of early childhood education (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2005; Taylor et al., 2004). The goal of family involvement practices in the preschool period is to enable both mothers and fathers to support their children by getting involved in school activities. However, in the research conducted, teachers indicate that their interlocutors when sharing information about child development are mainly mothers. It is a fact that in the preschool period, fathers get less involved in the educational activities of their children comparing to mothers. And likewise, the number of studies that examine the father-child relationship in this period is limited. The importance and necessity of attracting fathers to school through school-family activities are shown among the results of the family involvement practices (Baldwin et al., 2019; Dingus et al., 2022; Maselko et al., 2019). Hence, studies also show that there are also many traditional gender views, separating mother and father roles (Sudkämper et al., 2019; Summer et al.,2004). During the transmission of traditional values, gender stereotypes are also transmitted. For this reason, parenting roles and childcare are seen as the sole responsibility of the mother. Primarily, fathers are the breadwinners and secondarily parents (Andreasson & Johansson, 2016; Baruch & Barnett, 1987; Sudkämper et al., 2019). However, father roles in the lives of children are just as crucial as mother roles. Studies show that the father-child relationship is different from the mother-child relationship, and this unique relationship is vital for successful child development (Caldera & Hart, 2004).

The children who did not get enough parenting from their fathers most likely have negative behaviours such as timidity and shyness. Children who spend more time with their fathers are more advantageous in terms of social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development (Maselko et al., 2019; Rolle et al., 2019; Wilson &Prior, 2011;). Not only father involvement contributes to the development of the child, but also it contributes to the father himself and the relationship between the spouses positively. As fathers spend quality time with their children interactively, they get more satisfied with the fatherhood roles and enable family members to establish more positive relationships with each other (Kotelchuck, 2022; Kwok & Li, 2015). For example, they will share the mother workload when they take care of their children, and this situation will affect the quality of the relationships within the family (Lamb, 1997). At this point, the emotional support which fathers provide is also crucial for mothers. Fathers increase the quality of the mother-child relationship when they support the mothers of their children. When they do not help out, children will also be adversely affected as mothers (Cummings & O'Reilly, 1997). Studies reveal that fathers do not take enough responsibility for the family involvement in the preschool period whereas, the spouses support each other by sharing the roles in today's modern family. The interaction of fathers and mothers with their children is fundamentally similar, and this situation points to the fact that father involvement is as effective as mother involvement (Marsiglio,1995). However, when the studies were examined, it was observed that even if the fathers take the responsibility of getting involved in the preschool period more, mothers still get involved in the educational activities more than fathers (Unuvar, 2011; Darling- Fisher & Tiedje, 1990).

Children need the support of affectionate and sensitive adults from infancy to adolescence. Boller et al., (2006) consider that father involvement in the preschool period can affect the children development directly. Fathers can get involved in school or home environment by taking part in the relevant school activities and assisting their children with their homework (Williams, 2010). Research demonstrates when fathers get involved in the education of their children actively through the activities such as; developing higher empathy, self-esteem, verbal and problem-solving skills, this brings favourable outcomes in children (Fathers & Network, 2011). For example, a study revealed that 90% of children with father involvement achieved academic and social success (Kramer, 2001). Likewise, according to Tekin (2012), the children whose fathers are involved in early childhood education start kindergartens with higher school readiness skills than the children with a lower level of father involvement. Father support plays a favourable role in the definition and development of analytical skills, intelligence levels, core skills, linguistic intelligence, and academic achievement of children (Williams, 2010; Pagan & Fagan, 2008), social and emotional skills, maturity, level of independence, psychosocial adaptation, and gender identity (Wilson & Prior, 2011; Tezel Şahin & Özyürek 2010; Caldera & Hart, 2004; Coley & Morris, 2002).

Despite the studies in the literature, family involvement activities in schools are still mother-oriented. Early childhood educators state that father involvement is less (Aydın, 2003; Unuvar, 2011). For this reason, it becomes clear that father involvement roles must be supported in schools with educator reinforcement, and fathers must be encouraged to take part in the

family involvement activities. Hence, evidence obtained from various cultures put forward that the way fathers communicate is unique and different (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2008; Kramer, 2001; Rolle et al., 2019). When we summarise the studies in general, we see that the importance of fathers in child development has been revealed despite the limited studies about fathers with children in the preschool period. However, although the significance of father involvement for child development is known, it is still considered that the primary responsibility for developing children is on mothers, and there is not a rooted perception regarding the conception that the father involvement is as compulsory as mother involvement (Wilson & Prior, 2011). Studies recommended developing intervention activities related to father involvement to strengthen this perception (Uludağlı, 2017). Likewise, Koçak (2004) indicated that although fathers take more active responsibility for their children together with the fatherhood role influenced by the changing social structure, fathers need support for involvement, there are shortcomings about the activities for them in family involvement in the preschool period, and training is necessary for them. Many research activities conducted in Turkey and across the world pointed out that fathers are as essential as mothers in the education of their children and pointed to the importance and necessity of attracting fathers to the school (Downer & Mendez, 2005; Çağdaş & Seçer, 2010). MCEF organised an FSP programme in an independent kindergarten in the Derince district in Kocaeli province. And this study aims to analyse the reasons for the trainee fathers to attend the programme, the change in their views on father involvement roles, and their suggestions for the programme. The question of the study is "What kind of a change occurred in the fatherhood roles of the participants of the father support programme (FSP) in line with their participation goals, and what are the recommendations?" In this scope, the answers to the following sub-questions were sought.

1. What are the reasons for fathers to attend the father support programme?
2. What kind of a change occurred in the views of the fathers on fatherhood roles after they attended the father support programme?
3. What are the suggestions of the fathers who completed the father support programme regarding the training programme?

## METHOD

### Research Model

In this study, the qualitative research method was applied because it aims to reveal why fathers needed to participate in the father support programme, fatherhood roles of these fathers after they participated in the training activities, and their views on how to improve this programme. According to Creswell (2002), qualitative research is a type of research based on questioning, exploring, and explaining the problem situations related to social life and people, with its own methods. In this study, the case study design, one of the qualitative research designs, was preferred since the answers to the questions beginning with words "why" and "how" were sought when receiving the views of the participants. In this study, it was tried to examine why the participants preferred to participate in this programme and what the effects of the programme were. It was tried to examine why the participants preferred to participate in this programme and how the effects of the programme were. The case study comes to the fort as a research method proceeding based on the questions beginning with words "why" and "how", providing the researchers to deeply examine the current phenomena and events which they cannot control (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, Yin, 2014). Implementing this design through the realistic examples obtained from individuals' natural environments enables researchers to exhibit the phenomena with a holistic approach.

### Study Group

The study group was formed through the criterion sampling method as one of the purposeful sampling methods. Two criteria were used to determine the participants in the study. The first criterion was to include the fathers who attended the father support programme. The second criterion was to involve the fathers with children that still attended kindergarten. The sampling of this study consisted of 12 fathers who regularly attended the Father Support Programme conducted in a kindergarten in Derince district of Kocaeli province in the 2019-2020 academic year since this study focused on the involvement of the fathers with children between the ages of 3 and 6. Participant codes were given with the letter "P" for the word participant and in numbers (P1, P2, etc.) according to the order of the participation in the study. The features of the participants were given in Table 1.

### Data Collection

In the data collection process, preparing the research questions, preparing an interview form, specifying the study group, and conducting interviews were followed in order (King, 2004). In this study, primarily, semi-structured questions were prepared to be used during the interviews. The validity of the interview form was provided by receiving the opinions of two subject matter experts. The interview form was rearranged according to the expert opinions and then finalised. The interview form was piloted with two participants who had participated in the father support programme previously. After the implementation, based on the answers given, a conclusion was drawn that the questions were comprehensible. The interviews took place four weeks later than the programme to give time to the fathers to find an opportunity to apply what they learned during the programme. Interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 30 minutes.

**Data Analysis**

In the study, the content analysis method was used at the evaluation stage of the data obtained during the interviews. The content analysis is the conceptualisation of the data after the data collection stage primarily by coding and then by categorising them and a deep and regular examination of the messages in the text (Baltacı, 2019). The conceptual meaning of each piece of data was examined. Then the obtained codes were divided into categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Trustworthiness is primarily emphasised to provide the validity and reliability of qualitative research. The sub-dimensions of trustworthiness are listed as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Merriam, 2013). It is important to ensure the credibility for the internal validity in the outcomes of research. Long-term interaction, participant confirmation, and expert reviews methods are used to ensure credibility (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996). The expert opinions were asked related to the codes and categories created during the data analysis. In qualitative research, to ensure validity, it is essential to receive expert opinions about the created codes and categories and make calculations according to the agreements and disagreements (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The raw data obtained in the research, codes and categories were submitted to the examination of three faculty members who are experts in educational sciences and their opinions were calculated using Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula (Reliability = Agreement / Agreement + Disagreement) to ensure the reliability of the study. In the reliability work conducted for this study, a 90% agreement rate was achieved. The data were analysed by taking the voice records to ensure the objectivity of the study. The coding and category method were used for the findings. Besides, the participant views were presented with their own statements in the findings section. To ensure validity and reliability, creating data through original opinions and reporting in detail how the results are reached are essential criteria for the academic studies (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

**Table 1. Demographic Features of the Study Group**

| Code | Education Level | Age | Occupation | Number of Children |
|------|-----------------|-----|------------|--------------------|
| P1 | Secondary School | 35 | Worker | 1 |
| P2 | Elementary School | 38 | Worker | 2 |
| P3 | Bachelor's | 37 | Teacher | 2 |
| P4 | Secondary School | 40 | Tradesman | 2 |
| P5 | Secondary School | 42 | Tradesman | 2 |
| P6 | Secondary School | 36 | Worker | 1 |
| P7 | Bachelor's | 38 | Teacher | 1 |
| P8 | Bachelor's | 38 | Engineer | 1 |
| P9 | Bachelor's | 45 | Engineer | 2 |
| P10 | Secondary School | 43 | Tradesman | 2 |
| P11 | Secondary School | 37 | Worker | 1 |
| P12 | Secondary School | 35 | Worker | 1 |

**FINDINGS**

The categories reached through the content analysis of the data obtained about why fathers wanted to participate in the Father Support Programme, the change in father involvement roles that the programme created and the participant suggestions for the programme, are shown in Figure 1.

**Reasons for Participating in the Father Support Programme**

The reasons for the participants who were included in the study to participate in the Father Support Programme were examined in three categories: "Close relationship with the child, proper parental attitudes, and emotional support". In the dimension of the close relationship with the child, as the reasons for participating in the father support programme, the needs of the fathers such as; understanding the development and behaviours of their children better, knowing their children, getting support to strengthen the relationship with them, come to the forefront. Contributing to strong communication skills with children and improving the experiences with spending efficient and quality time with them are among the reasons for fathers to participate in the programme. The participants wanted to pull out of classic methods and have fatherhood roles with a scientific and professional approach, so they attended the father support programme. The participants needed to act by trusting themselves in raising their children. The fact which emerges among the reasons for attending the programme is that the parenthood of their parents affected the participants. For example, a participant expressed this situation as follows;

*"I came to realise that something we learnt from our fathers and mothers, and we know that they are correct, are actually false. Whatever our parents say, we followed their behaviours and guidance. Naturally, they did not ask the opinions of children, that is, our opinions. I wanted to attend to see what I did right, what I did wrong." (P2).*
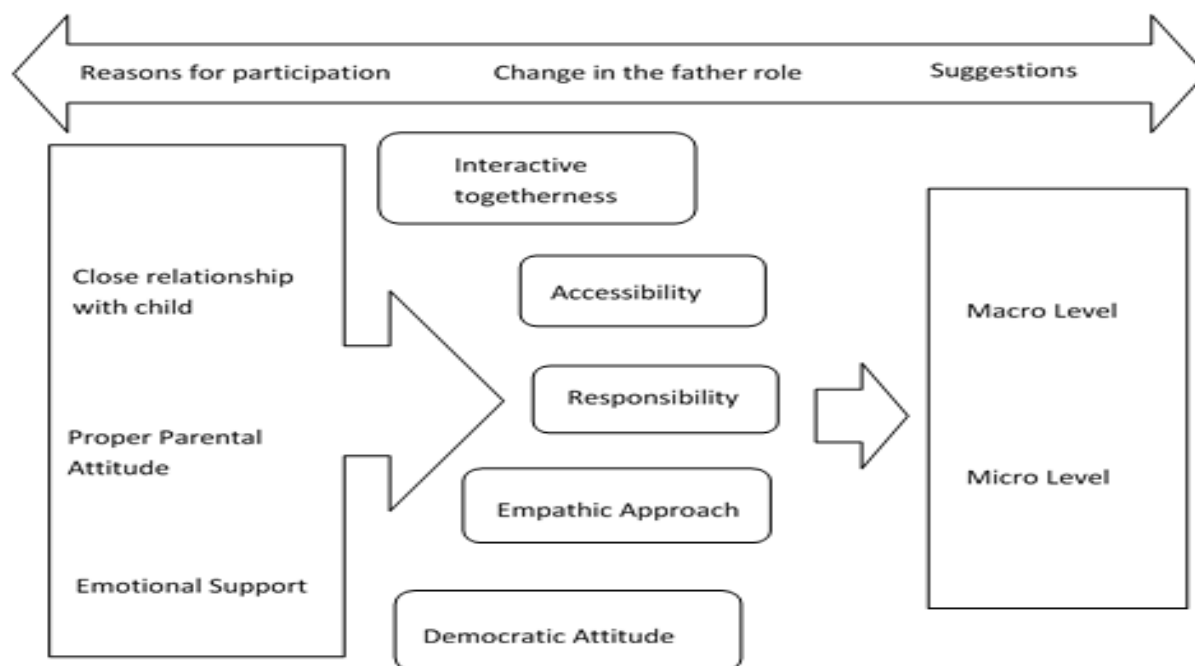


**Figure 1. Categories related to the reasons for participating in FSP, change in the father involvement roles, and suggestions**

Another reason for the participants' participation in the father support programme is related to their ability to control their emotions in their relationships with their children. The father encounters problems while coping with their children's behaviours with the factors such as workload and tiredness. And because they have difficulty dealing with this situation, they feel emotionally uneasy. They ignore that the children are individuals, assume an oppressive attitude towards them, and wave aside their wants. This situation paves the way for the domestic conflict environment. According to the data obtained, parents stated that they felt emotionally uneasy because of their attitudes towards their children and registered to the programme to solve domestic conflicts. For example, the expressions of P9 unfolds this circumstance;

*"I am a concessive father. I did nothing with my father. Frankly, because of this, I will do what my child asks. I have never hurt him/her so far. However, it has turned into a problem with my wife at home. In general, we had problems and conflict about this situation. I considered attending this programme to get support for this circumstance." (P9)*

**The Change in the Views on Father Involvement Role**

The fathers who attended the Father Support Programme stated their views on the fatherhood roles. And these roles were analysed in five categories: "Interactive Togetherness, Accessibility, Responsibility, Empathic Approach, and Democratic Attitude.

**Interactive Togetherness**

One of the categories that is efficient in the father involvement roles of the fathers who attended the programme is interactive togetherness. The programme enabled the fathers to realise the importance of spending time in good interaction with their children. The findings obtained from the interviews regarding the fatherhood roles conducted with the fathers revealed that the code: spending interactive and quality time with children comes into prominence. What is emphasised here is that being in the same environment with children does not mean spending time with them. The fathers, who attended the programme, indicated that the time spent together could have a meaning for both sides that they understand the necessity of interaction to actualise this and that they had already begun practises. Thanks to the programme, the fathers have changed their perspectives and started to consider that spending time with their children can become by interacting with them. The fathers reinforced ways to spend efficient time with their children through the assignments given in the course. For example, P6 stated this situation as follows. *"Previously, caring about my child meant to hang together while I was playing games on my mobile phone my child was playing on the tablet. I learnt that this was not spending time with my child and playing together." (P6)*

As we can see from these statements, before the programme, the fathers thought that "being around with their children" meant spending time with them. The other codes that the fathers, who are aware of spending time with children interactively,

emphasise are consisted of doing activities at home, playing games, and doing a different kind of activities together. The programme supported the fathers about how to spend time with their children in the home environment. For example, P3 emphasised the interactive togetherness with the following statements.

*"I learnt to design new things by beating my brain with my child and interacting. We have a lot of toys at home. For example, we have Lego pieces. We reuse them instead of rebuying them. … These were our assignments, and we applied these with the whole family." (P3).*

### Accessibility

In the category of accessibility, in general, the father's understanding and reinforcement of his presence in the life of his child and the child's need for the presence of his father are included. The fathers who became accessible indicated that they started to understand better what their children wanted, and they spent healthier time mutually by meeting the needs of their children. P8 made the following explanation about this;

*"When I went home and told my child that I was having a rest, my child was getting ill-tempered, and both of us were getting angry immediately. After I attended this programme, I saw when my child asks for something and even if I allocate 10 minutes and do what he/she wants delightfully, my child relaxes, calms down, and leaves me alone. Later, other hours pass calmer and they are left for me. (P8)*

### Responsibility

We see that the fathers take the "*responsibility*" towards their children when we examine the codes: eating and drinking, dressing, changing clothes, nutrition, covering the child with a blanket, bedtime routine revealed after the interviews. The conducted interviews revealed that the fathers with daughters considered that having a different gender from their daughters was a restrictive factor. For example, P2 thought that his daughter should have done some specific works with her mother. However, after participating in the programme, he realised that spending time together and parenting had nothing to do with the gender of the child. The fathers of daughters gained awareness of supporting their children in various subjects such as sexuality education. P1 pointed out that like the other parents who attended the programme, they could contribute to their children reaching them about different issues with the following explanation;

*"I have a daughter. In this programme, I have also learnt how to treat my child from sexual aspects, how to tell her the realities of the world,  that I should not keep something quiet, and how to treat her in terms of sexuality for the sake of her development." (P1)*

### Empathic Approach

The "*empathic approach*" category refers to accepting the child as an individual and recognising and understanding the emotions of the child as an individual. In the interviews, P10 expressed the essence of empathy and their awareness as follows. *"I understand that I must listen to my child, how their brains work, and how we should approach them thanks to the programme. The biggest contribution of this programme was this for me. I learnt to think like them. My empathy skill has developed." (P10).* Children also want their elders to give them responsibilities and let them act independently on the road to becoming an individual. The children can want to create an identification with their relatives by taking them a model. We see that the participants exhibit empathic behaviours such as accepting their children as individuals, stooping their level, and making eye contact. The statements of P12 regarding the empathy approach that strengthens communication as follows;

*"While we were talking with our children and making a dialogue with them, we were talking appropriate for our age group and in our own way. I learnt and understood the importance of talking with them by stooping their level, attracting their attention, and making eye contact." (P12).*

### Democratic Attitude

The codes that the participants expressed during the interviews: making a joint decision with children, discussing, thinking together, listening to each other, receiving family members' opinions exhibit that the parents tended to show a "democratic attitude" after they attended the programme. The participants understood the importance of thinking together with their children at the problem-solving stage. Besides, the programme provided both fathers to care about their children as individuals and everyone in the family to support the decision mechanisms in interaction. P4 drew attention to this issue as follows. *"I developed a behaviour of fulfilling our child's wishes by making a joint decision thanks to the programme. All family comes together and talks about it, I learnt to get the opinion of the child.." (P4)*

## Suggestions for FSP Programmes

The categories that were revealed by coding according to the suggestions of the participants who attended the father support programme were demonstrated at the micro and macro levels. Among the codes that came to the forefront at the micro-level, it

was indicated that the parents should attend such support programmes together, and families with different parental attitudes should be reached. Among the suggestions made at the macro-level, the integration of this school-run organisation into the educational curriculum and its spread through non-governmental organisations and municipalities are included. Generally, the participants reflected their satisfaction with the programme. The most prominent suggestion for the programme is in the dimension of attenders and it was about ensuring that both mother and father attend the programme together. According to the findings obtained, the participants dwelled on the consequences of the lack of education and emphasised that this situation creates ramifications regarding raising children and father involvement. The participants mentioned that this support programme should be announced especially to the parents with traditional perspectives, and they emphasised that many more fathers should be reached. Besides, the participants underlined that there should also be an increase in the number of accessed fathers who know their children, value their children as an individual, and take the right approach towards them. In a constantly changing world, the importance of participating in the training activities has been revealed in order to raise children with sound steps Increasing the activities in schools for parents, especially for fathers, has also been brought to the agenda within the suggestions. P5 stated the following on this issue.

*"We fathers must be invited to the schools more. The programmes should increase in number. The activities with children can be done with the whole family. Father involvement in activities betters their relationships with their children." (P5)*

Except for the programme titles and the content, the other aspects of the programme that the participants availed themselves of came to light in the suggestions section. The fathers made new friends during the programme. They emphasised that they found an opportunity to frequently share their opinions and suggestions regarding the activities, trip routes, and the solutions to the problems in this new social circle since they all had children in the peer group. The dissemination of the programme through macro-level support which was among the suggestions of the participants for the programme came to the forefront. According to the participants, the spread of the programme in all schools needs efforts. For example, P3 made the following explanation on this issue.

*"It must be included in the curriculum. It must be integrated into the system. The biggest problem of this nation is the lack of education. There is a large section of society that does not read and do research. We cannot achieve a change just by conducting this programme in a few places. The attendance of the parents must be made compulsory in every school." (P3).*

The participants also suggested collaborating with the municipalities to expand the programme at the macro level. They even wanted to reach more masses through the fairs by taking steps to collaborate with the municipality. The participants who made suggestions regarding the father support programme emphasised that this kind of training should have become widespread with more enriched content, and the collaboration with civil society and municipalities for support would be beneficial.

## DISCUSSION

The study findings show that the participants couldn't show consistency in their behaviours toward their children and relationships with them before they attended the programme. Some participants declared that they had a nervous attitude and did not know how to treat when they came home from work feeling tired while some participants stated that they did everything that their children asked and this situation became a problem in their relationships with their children. The inconsistent approaches of the participants cause them to have trouble in in-family relationships. The findings obtained from the study show that the fathers who attended the programme have positive opinions about the parental roles. That is, the belief of a father in the parental role plays a reinforcing role in father involvement (Kwok & Li, 2015; Sudkämper et al., 2019). The need to prevent family conflicts and to get emotional support manifests that the participants care about their relationships with their wives as much as with their children. This finding regarding the reason for the participants to attend the programme supports the findings in the literature which point out that the quality of the relationship between the spouses influences the father involvement (Kwok & Li, 2015; Bradford & Hawkins, 2006; Pedro et al., 2012; İvrendi & Işıkoğlu, 2010). The change in the father involvement roles of the fathers who attended the father support programme was examined in five categories: Interactive Togetherness, Accessibility, Responsibility, Empathic Approach, and Democratic Attitude. In the literature, accessibility, availability, and responsibility are the three prominent components regarding father involvement (Lamb et al., 1987). The fathers mainly preferred the games that include physical activities before the programme and then they began giving a place for creative, artistic, and exploratory activities in their games with children thanks to the programme. Various studies in the literature show that the father training given within the scope of family involvement contributed to the fathers positively in terms of spending interactive time with their children (Dingus et al., 2022; Pherson & Robinson, 1990)

The fathers understood their influences on the existence of their children with the Father Support Programme. As a result of their study, Kocayörük & Sümer (2009) indicated that the father involvement training activities contributed to the father-child relationship positively and made a change in the behaviours towards children, and this shows the similarity in the research outcomes. When the literature was examined, it was seen that the gender of the child is effective in father involvement, and fathers are more interested in their boys and take more responsibility in their care (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Lamb, 2000). It was noticed that some fathers who attended the programme considered the gender of the child a restrictive factor before the programme. With the Father Support Programme, these perceptions of the fathers have changed. The effects of patriarchal

structure on the responsibilities towards children, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, or dressing, came to light with the study. Together with these results, the research findings show that the father support programme can be effective in terms of contributing to gender equality by recognising gender roles and stereotypical parenting roles (Sudkämper et al., 2019). The fathers stated that they provided their children with the responsibility and attention they did not receive from their fathers. Seeing what they did was correct through the programme supported their self-confidence. In the conception of today's contemporary fatherhood, the fact that the fathers assume more responsibility for their children in their parenting roles takes place in the other studies in the literature (Baldwin et al., 2019; Kwok & Li, 2015). In the study, accepting the child as an individual and realising and understanding the emotions of the child as an individual was examined as an "empathic approach". And an increase in the empathy skills of the fathers became thanks to the programme. It came to light that the fathers who acquired behaviours such as making eye contact and stooping children's level started to understand their children better, and this affected their relationships favourably. With the father support programme, the fathers felt and understood the importance of the play by finding an opportunity to rediscover their childhood emotions. The other research findings also support the positive contributions of these programmes regarding both fathers' relationships with their children and their favourable feelings (Unuvar, 2011; Downer & Mendez, 2005; Lamb, 2000). We see that the fathers who attended the programme demonstrate a tendency towards a democratic attitude. The fathers with democratic attitudes demonstrate more father involvement in terms of interaction, accessibility, and responsibility (Gaertner et al., 2007). The positive relationship between the programme and the democratic father attitudes, interactive togetherness with children, accessibility and taking responsibility is the similarity of this study with the other studies in the literature. The suggestions of the participants that attended the father support programme were analysed in two dimensions: at the micro and macro levels. The prominent suggestions exhibit mothers and fathers should participate in such support programmes together, and the families with different parental attitudes should be reached. Many studies support similar outcomes (Koçak, 2004; Pleck, 2010) The suggestions at the macro level included that this organisation run by the school should be integrated into the curricula and spread in the schools, and it should be disseminated more through non-governmental organisations and the municipalities.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study outcomes, it can be recommended to support the collaborations with preschool education institutions to spread the father support programmes to the wider masses. The local authorities can make a significant contribution to identifying the schools and parent profiles in the regions where training needs are appearent to specify the parent needs. For this reason, the support of the local authorities and non-governmental organisations to such programmes can facilitate the dissemination. For the dissemination of the training activities, studies can be carried out in universities for the prospective teachers to allow them to meet the Father Support Programme and the Ministry of National Education can take steps to support the teachers that are competent in family involvement programmes to apply these activities in their classrooms and schools. The father support programmes can be enriched with the activities that ensure mother and father involvement based on parental requirements in the regions where the schools are located. In this context, another issue to be considered is to determine the training needs of the parents. In this study, it was seen that the fathers needed a close relationship with their children, emotional support, and parental attitudes based on scientific foundations. However, parents from different school regions can have different needs. For this reason, while developing the contents of the father support programmes, pre-tests can be applied by considering the parent profiles and needs in the school area. The researchers can focus on the long-term effects of the long-term programmes to determine the impacts of the Father Support Programmes and ensure their continuity. The outcomes of this study focused on the father roles. However, other studies can examine the impacts of the programme on the family besides its effects on the fathers since the relationship between the domestic conflicts and father involvement is emphasised.

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