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## Child Rights Education from the Perspective of New Sociology of Childhood\*

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## **Abstract**

In this study, children's rights education is theoretically evaluated in the context of the new sociology of childhood. International documents identify the right to education as one of the fundamental human rights. In the 1980s and 1990s, when the new sociology of childhood emerged in response to developmental psychology and traditional socialization theories, many experts held that the sociology of childhood and children's rights were two complementary fields. The first of the prominent views in terms of an alternative perspective is the view that childhood is not a universal form and is considered under social, political, historical and moral aspects. This view has made a significant contribution to the discussion of rights in the political and social context in terms of sociological analysis and criticism. The second important view of the sociology of childhood is that childhood is considered as an active and creative social factor in an environment that surrounds and includes it. Child rights education should be provided in a structure that contributes to the development of the child as an active individual in the context of the new sociology of childhood. Hence, recognizing and integrating the insights from the new sociology of childhood is pivotal for a more nuanced, comprehensive, and effective child rights education.

**Keywords:** Childhood, sociology of childhood, child rights education, human rights education.

## **Introduction**

Writing, speaking, and reading about children and childhood is an arduous process (Şirin, 2019). Children and childhood are of interest to many social sciences. Depending on this interest, theoretical and empirical researches are conducted by scholars. However, it must first be noted that theoretical discussions about childhood are not yet sufficiently mature (Şenol & Taş, 2020). In the following pages of this study, it will become apparent that the question of whether childhood is a period, a category, or a variable has been debated for a long time. The fact that theoretical discussions are not yet sufficiently mature and saturated brings with it the difficulty of pointing out the boundaries of the field of study.

When one begins to think about the concepts of child and childhood, one encounters many works that are to be read at the level of foundational texts. In the works on ecological approaches to childhood, a holistic perspective emerges. The insights and findings presented in these works continue to influence the discussion today. In particular, there are views that are held within a dichotomous discussion of childhood. Let's start with one of them: the first question is "Is childhood universal?". As sociologist Eğribel (2019, p. 41) notes, there have long been efforts to create a "universal grammar of childhood." However, there are also opinions that state that a universal understanding of childhood is not defensible (Akbaş & Topçuoğlu, 2009; Aydoğmuş-Ördem, 2020).

From childbearing and childrearing practices that today's mass media try to indoctrinate to children's behavior patterns, there is an explicit or implicit urge to give guidance. When the subject is viewed from the universal perspective of childhood, an idealized and stereotypical child prototype can be presented. However, even when examining everyday practices, one may encounter many types of childhood. In particular, in an approach where socioeconomic level is accepted as the main variable, different childhood typologies may emerge.

One of the most important questions that texts on children and childhood seek answers to, or attempt to define, is the question "Who is the child?" Each scientific discipline or branch of science answers this question from its own perspective. From the perspective of social sciences, one may come across different answers. The part that concerns the social sciences is the meaning culturally attributed

to the child and childhood, rather than a biological classification. This is because childhood is a psychological, sociological, anthropological and historical concept (Güçlü, 2016). Here, a distinction is made between child and childhood. Childhood is a construction process (Aydoğmuş-Ördem, 2020). In addition to the biological development of the child, the cultural consideration of the child has also contributed to the construction of the term (Akbaş & Topçuoğlu, 2009; Hammersley, 2019). Issues such as the sociological meaning the child has for the family, childrearing practices, and expectations of the child make it necessary to look at the concept of childhood culturally. The semantic baggage or burdens the child takes on before birth, the responsibilities he brings to his parents with his arrival in the world, and the set of behaviors expected according to the child's developmental tasks require dealing with the child within an ecosystem.

It is difficult to represent childhood without sociological interpretations and conceptualizations. Sociology is a branch of the social sciences that has begun the process of institutionalization among the social sciences and has made considerable progress in this process. Sociology seeks to analyze phenomena, actors, and institutions in the study of society. The fact that childhood falls within the area of interest of sociology and is worthy of research is because it is a social reality and category (Eraslan, 2019). Sociology is a branch of science that pays attention to a holistic approach because of the methods and interpretations it uses in the study of society. In terms of a holistic approach, the fact that the family as a sociological category is also very important in terms of childhood arouses interest in this topic (Şirin, 2019).

### **The New Sociology of Childhood**

In sociology, classical sociology examined childhood through the dichotomy of adults and children (Demir Gürdal, 2013). While many characteristics that would be considered scientific in classical sociology were attributed to adults, more characteristics such as irrationality, dependence, and passivity were attributed to children (Akbaş & Erükçü-Akbaş, 2019). This dilemma also affects the meaning of childhood. In particular, characteristics such as dependency and passivity attributed to the child raise questions about the valuation of childhood as a period in its own right. While childhood is constructed, a child who is aware of his or her autonomy can be said to be engaged in the process of self-knowledge and maturation. The sociology of childhood does not evaluate the child as a property (Güçlü, 2016). In the sociology of childhood, in which the child is considered as an individual, the above paradigms have different views.

When considering childhood in terms of sociological paradigms, one generally encounters the positivist paradigm, the interpretive paradigm, and the postmodern paradigm. These three paradigms have different views of childhood. Şenol and Taş (2020, pp. 190-193) comparatively examined how positivist, interpretivist, and postmodern paradigms are reflected in discussions in the sociology of childhood. They also showed that the ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives of each paradigm correspond to the theoretical assumptions in the sociology of childhood. The positivist paradigm assumes that the child has a universal nature and that society plays a leading role in the development and education of children. One of the scientific assumptions of the positivist paradigm is that objective information about children is valid in all societies. It also assumes that childhood can be explained through scientific research. The interpretivist paradigm assumes that the nature of the child is not universal and that society can influence children as much as children can influence society. It also states that theories about childhood cannot be considered universal, but that childhood can be

interpreted through science, and that this requires the views of children. The postmodern paradigm, on the other hand, holds that information about the child, which is variable, is relative and that childhood research cannot be conducted using a standardized method.

The sociology of childhood is divided into two categories: traditional and new sociology of childhood. While the traditional sociology of childhood focuses on the process of "socialization" the new sociology of childhood is oriented toward the idea of the "child as a social actor/social construction" (Erdoğan & Vakıf, 2020). In the structure-agent dichotomy, the traditional sociology of childhood assumes that there is a one-way relationship between structure and actor, while the new sociology of childhood assumes that there is an interaction between structure and actor. The construction of childhood differs according to culture and society. This differentiation can even occur within the same society (Demir Gürdal, 2013). Childhoods that may differ, especially in relation to socioeconomic variables, show that the notion of an ideal child or children is also an imposition. Stereotypes are created about children from middle-class families as ideal child(ren).

The social problems addressed in discussions of the ideal childhood or adulthood may be similar in both categories. Many of the social problems such as poverty, immigration, and inequality that occur in the adult world are also found in the child world (Demir Gürdal, 2013). It should be noted that the sociology of childhood remains an exceptional area in mainstream sociological discussion (Şenol & Taş, 2020). The sociology of childhood has been neglected for many years (Eraslan, 2019; Şirin, 2019). This neglect is not only specific to children. At the same time, adults and especially women have not been the focus of sociology (Demir Gürdal, 2013). Recently, studies that focus on human beings as subjects have become common. The fact that classical sociology tends to focus on structural and institutional sociology may have led to a relatively small number of studies on children, adults, and women. There is a need to discuss how childhood should be treated sociologically or professionally. Eğribel (2019) argues that the sociology of childhood should not be a subfield of sociology, but a field in which the content and methods of sociology are put into practice with a sociological perspective. However, there are also opinions that consider sociology of childhood as a subfield such as urban sociology and sociology of crime (Erdoğan & Vakıf, 2020). In the sociology of childhood, there continue to be debates about the developmental paradigm on the one hand and the name of the field on the other. "Childhood studies" or "sociology of childhood" is usually used as the name of the field (Demir Gürdal, 2013). There are opinions about the study of children as a field in its own right (Hammersley, 2019). Cultural studies can also be a field of research like child or childhood studies, like women's studies. As an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary field, it combines developmental psychology, anthropology, geography, sociology, and other social science disciplines (Mayall, 2020). It is well known that developmental psychology has made a significant contribution to the study of childhood. Determining developmental milestones in child development research, attempting to explain developmental patterns, and measuring the impact of environmental influences on individual differences are important milestones (Mayall, 2020). Eraslan (2019) argues that the main topics of discussion in the sociology of early childhood are socialization theory and the understanding of childhood as subject and childhood as generational order in the new context of the sociology of childhood. The new paradigm of the sociology of childhood includes four conceptions:

- Children are subjects of their own representation.
- Childhood is a natural phenomenon.
- Childhood is a political-cultural construct.
- Children are subjects who must operate under controlled conditions.

Although the new sociology of childhood is recognized as a field of study, it has not received enough attention in Türkiye (Demir Gürdal, 2013). This can be explained by the fact that classical sociology still has a strong position in Türkiye. However, the sociology of childhood is a field that has developed in sociology since the 1970s (Güllü, 2015). There are many questions that need to be answered and problems that need to be solved in order for children to live a life appropriate to their childhood (Ercan, 2011). In order to find the most accurate answers to these questions, children can be the subject of a research or children can be researchers (Akbaş & Erükçü-Akbaş, 2019). Prout and James (2005, p. 8) explain the characteristics and key aspects of the new paradigm of the sociology of childhood as follows:

Childhood is a social construction. Childhood provides an interpretative framework for making sense of or contextualizing the early years of human life. Unlike biological immaturity, childhood is neither a natural nor a universal characteristic of human groups. But it can be seen as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies. Childhood is a variable of social analysis. It should not be separated from other variables such as class, gender or ethnicity. Comparative and cross-cultural analyses reveal that there are different childhoods rather than a single, universal phenomenon. Children's social relations and cultures are worth studying in their own right, independent of adult interests and perspectives. Children are the determinants and constructors of their own social lives, their environment and the society in which they live and should be seen as active. Children are not passive subjects of social structures and processes. Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for childhood studies. Ethnography offers more possibilities for obtaining sociological data through the direct voice and participation of children than experimental or survey styles. Childhood is already a phenomenon associated with a dual hermeneutic in the social sciences.

With the modern nation-state, efforts to raise good citizens also affected the definition of childhood. A pedagogical relationship was established between the state and the public. Social science disciplines were dominated by a positivist understanding in which they tried to find the reasons behind the behavior of the "child" (Mayall, 2020). In a time when childhoods are experienced instead of children, a generalized childhood phenomenon does not seem possible (Akbaş & Topçuoğlu, 2009). In his book, Tezcan (2012) covers the topics in the field of child sociology under the headings of child education, social change, discipline, religion, play, vacation, peer relations, social problems and violence. The multifaceted handling of the issues that affect and are affected by the child in the development process makes it necessary to master the basic working disciplines of multiple social sciences. Otherwise, the child or childhood would be analyzed in a very narrow scope. For example, approaching the subject from the perspective of the history of childhood, it will be seen how long and arduous the distance traveled in different societies and in different histories in terms of child development (Stearns, 2018). In terms of social theories of childhood, deterministic models include functionalist and reproductivist models, and in terms of the constructivist approach, the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky come to mind. Corsaro's (2015) interpretive understanding of reproduction remains current. From a structural perspective, childhood includes psychological, psychoanalytic and life experiences. Corsaro

(2015) mentions three different methods in working with childhood and children. The first one is macro-level methods. Macro-level methods include demographic studies, large-scale surveys and historical methods. Micro-level methods include individual and group interviews; ethnography and socio-linguistic analysis. Non-traditional or unconventional methods include studies in which children are directly involved in the research process.

## **Child Rights Education and Human Rights Education**

### ***Human Rights and Education***

If we look at the emergence of the concept of human rights from prehistoric times to the present, we can say that the first times were characterized by everyday fictions, while today these rights are universally recognized. Human rights are all rights that are granted to human beings only because they are human beings. Human rights are a set of universal principles and rules that people have because they are human beings (Gülmez, 2001). All human beings have all the basic rights mentioned without distinction of religion, language, race and gender. Human rights are universal because they are addressed to all humanity. According to Yeşil (2002), human rights are the rights that all human beings have only because they are human beings, and they result from the necessity of human dignity, without any discrimination between human beings. Şen (2021, p. 464) defines the concept of human rights as "a strong and effective discourse used to defend, criticize, and correct all kinds of ideas and actions." The Council of Europe Youth Program defines human rights as follows: ...educational programs and activities that focus on promoting equality in human dignity and work in conjunction with various programs with goals such as intercultural learning, participation, and minority empowerment (Compass, 2008, p. 17).

The history and background of the concept of human rights is quite old. It would not be wrong to say that the history of human rights began with the history of humanity, as people have been searching for rights and freedom since the day they were created. It is believed that the first ideas about human rights came on the agenda with the birth of democracy in the site states founded in ancient Greece and Rome (Yeşil, 2002).

From the primitive times until today, many documents and conventions about human rights have been published, and many human rights such as equality, authenticity, dignity, and freedom have been realized. Today, the application of human rights is closely related to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR], which was proclaimed by the United Nations [UN] General Assembly on December 10, 1948. Some 200 instruments for the protection of human rights have emerged in connection with the UDHR. Finally, the Convention on the Rights of the Child [CRC] entered into force in 1989 (Şen, 2021). There is a close relationship and cooperation between the dissemination of the UDHR and educational processes. In particular, the Associated Schools Project Network [ASPnet], launched in 1953 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] has become a large-scale project involving 11500 schools from 182 countries as well as one kindergarten, eight elementary school, five secondary schools and 19 high schools from Türkiye by 2020 (Şen, 2021). In addition to the United Nations, the Council of Europe [CoE], of which Türkiye is a member, is also interested in human rights education [HRE]. The CoE implemented the Charter for Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education between 1997 and 2009. Türkiye has ratified some articles of the UN and CoE human rights documents with reservations. The articles to which reservations have been made are those related to minority rights in the context of nation-state ideology (Şen, 2021). One of the most important characteristics of the ideal human being and citizen that societies want to

achieve is that he knows his rights and freedoms and is able to apply them in his life. The way to know, recognize and properly apply human rights is through education in family, school and society. Human rights education is the systematic information of people about their human rights so that they can internalize and defend universal values. Through human rights education, individuals first learn to respect human rights, to understand that these rights are innate, inalienable and inalienable, and to work to develop and establish this awareness (Tanırlı, 2007). The main purpose of human rights education is to enable individuals to learn, appropriate and apply their rights in their lives and to develop an attitude of respect for the rights of others.

In the "Definitions" section of the Council of Europe Charter on Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (2010), human rights education is defined as "education, training, awareness-raising initiatives, information, practices and activities aimed at enabling pupils and students to contribute to the creation and defense of a universal human rights culture in society by equipping them with knowledge, skills and understanding and improving their attitudes and behavior in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms."

In Türkiye, various studies on human rights education have been conducted since the early years of the Republic in the context of rapid nationalization and the reappraisal of civic knowledge. Although human rights were not initially taught as an independent subject, attempts were made to implement them by referring to the achievements of the main subjects in the middle disciplines. The topics related to human rights and citizenship were treated as an intermediate discipline from 1st grade onward, and the related achievements were linked to the achievements in life sciences in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades of elementary school and in social studies courses in 4th grade.

Since 1995, the course "Civics and Human Rights" has been taught in 8th grade. In addition, the elective course "Democracy and Human Rights" was included in the secondary school curriculum (Gökburun, 2007, p. 91). In the 2005-2006 school year, the civics and human rights education course was abolished, and efforts were made to combine the acquisition of knowledge about human rights in elementary school with life skills and social studies, and in secondary school with the acquisition of knowledge about the history of the Turkish Revolution and Kemalism. With the decision of the Education and Teaching Committee of the Ministry of National Education [MoNE] on 11.06.2015 and number 35, the Human Rights, Citizenship and Democracy course was introduced as a compulsory subject in the fourth grade of elementary school from the 2015-2016 school year (MoNE, 2015). Nowadays, human rights education is taught compulsorily two hours per week in 8th grade, i.e. the course "History of Turkish Revolution and Kemalism" in secondary schools and compulsorily taught two hours per week in 4th grade. In high schools, it can be taught as an elective subject under the name of Democracy and Human Rights Course (ttkb.meb.gov.tr).

The goal of human rights education is to make individuals sensitive citizens who are aware of their rights and can take action on human rights issues. Through this education, individuals should acquire the awareness of being a human being, of adapting to the society to which they belong, and of developing an awareness of living together with respect for the rights of others. The best way to teach human rights is to relate rights and duties to real life and to show the connections through case studies. The textbook for the Human Rights, Citizenship and Democracy course distributed by the Ministry of National Education noted that fairy tales and stories, i.e. case studies, were used to implement the learning outcomes of the course. Human rights education begins in the family and continues according

to the social developments to which the child is exposed during his/her social life. Therefore, the family into which a child is born, the school he or she attends, and the classroom environment, his or her teacher and friends, in short, his or her social environment, are extremely effective in human rights learning. To talk about human rights education, one must first talk about children's rights education. This is because every person develops on the path to adulthood through childhood experiences. It is not possible for a child to say he was never an adult and for an adult to say he was never a child.

### ***Child Rights and Education***

To truly grasp children's rights, we must revisit our understanding of childhood. Historically, children have been perceived and treated variably across different cultures. The notion of 'a child' isn't static; it has evolved based on lifestyle, cultural shifts, philosophical beliefs, and the demands of various epochs. It's a misconception to view childhood as a uniform and global phenomenon, as societies have delineated the child's role based on their unique cultural norms and values (Doğan, 2000). Akyüz (2018) further emphasized that the definition of childhood is deeply rooted in the sociocultural fabric and molded by a society's prevalent norms and values. The perception of childhood is inherently societal and has carried diverse interpretations across different cultures and eras. Its significance can vary not only between societies but also within different sections of the same society, being as malleable as other societal constructs and shaped by prevailing norms (Tan, 1989). Onur (2001) posits that contemporary views of children lean towards recognizing them as creative, engaged, rights-aware individuals who are continually adapting and influencing their surroundings.

In ancient societies, people did not consider childhood as a different stage of life. The child was closely associated with the mother and was considered a time-consuming endeavor. The child was important and valuable to the extent that he or she could be useful. Even in ancient Rome, boys were considered more valuable because girls were weaker in terms of labor (Doğan, 2000). With Islam, the value placed on children increased, and famous thinkers put forth their ideas about child rearing and development (Yavuzer, 2003). While Ariès argues that there were no concepts of children and childhood in the Middle Ages (Akyüz, 2018, p. 95), Sharar (1997, cited in Ateş, 2015) states that the idea of childhood and the concept of childhood existed in the Middle Ages. According to the requirements of the Middle Ages, children helped the family with work and were forced to work. However, children were usually affected by epidemics and conflicts, and many child deaths occurred.

From ancient times until the beginning of the 18th century, children were ignored and considered incomplete and inadequate adults. Political and social changes led to a change in the value placed on human beings. The views of intellectuals and philosophers of the time about children led to children being viewed as subjects with rights. John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau had a great influence in this sense (Doğan, 2000). In his book *History of Childhood*, Ariès emphasizes that by the mid-18th century, the child was no longer seen as a small adult, adulthood had an opposite meaning, and childhood was perceived as a special and sensitive stage (Sennett, 2010, p. 130; Spring, 2010, p. 94). In the 19th century, the idea that children were different from adults and should be treated in a special way became widespread. In the 20th century, great importance was given to children's research so that children could live in better conditions and in greater prosperity, and this century was even called the century of the child (Akyüz, 2018; Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2009). Today, in the 21st century, the importance and value attached to the child continues to increase, and the child is seen as unique, one of a kind, and valuable even in his or her own sphere. This is because the child and his or her world can be

understood by taking into account both his or her own cultural and particular social conditions and the special way of existence that makes him or her a child (Öktem, 2012).

In this historical process, it becomes clear that it is not easy for children to gain both their own identity and their rights. With new developments and changes, the idea that children are special beings and that efforts should be made to protect and develop them has taken hold. Humanistic thought and the French Revolution, which spread throughout the Western world over time, are the developments that began to awaken the idea that children can have their own rights (Dirican, 2018). Based on the idea that children are individuals with rights and that these rights should be protected by international law, the idea of establishing an organization to protect children was first expressed by Jules de Jeune in 1894 (Akyüz, 2001; Müftü, 2011). However, due to wars and political developments, this demand could not be fully met. The fact that children suffer the most in war environments has made the idea that children should be protected more and more important over time, and international studies have come on the agenda.

The documents that form the basis for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and are significant in the historical development of children's rights are the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the 1959 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child, and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Among these documents, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is still in force today and has been signed by 196 countries around the world, is considered to be the most comprehensive and valid internationally recognized convention related to children's rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989. Türkiye ratified this convention on 27 January 1995.

Based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children's rights are a universal concept that defines all the rights that all children in the world have from birth, such as life, protection, development and participation. Children's rights are the powers and benefits granted to all children by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, published by the United Nations on November 20, 1989 in 54 articles to raise the quality of life of children in the world to the level they deserve.

The Rights of the Child is the official convention agreed upon by all countries in the world, which ensures that the child is nurtured in all aspects of his or her development from the moment of birth, grows up in a healthy environment, is protected from all forms of abuse and neglect, and has the same rights as adults (Hodgkin & Newell, 2000). Children's rights represent a specific area of human rights and can be considered as a set of opportunities granted to all children to lead them to good and beautiful. They also aim to protect children from all kinds of abuse at the international level. With the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the child has been given a social status and has taken a step towards becoming an active individual in society (Doek, 2008).

Teaching children fundamental rights and freedoms is one of the most important prerequisites today. An individual's ability to develop in any way, to understand the environment, society and the world in which he lives, to find creative solutions to his problems, to be a useful individual in society and to take responsibility depends primarily on learning about his own rights and freedoms and developing a sense of rights (Covell & Howe, 1999). This is because the path to understanding and analyzing social developments that occur in daily life routines is through universal democratic attitudes

and values. Therefore, it is of great importance to start rights education in childhood in order to develop democratic attitudes and values. In order for children to grow up as subjects with rights and to be able to use and defend their rights in daily life, they must learn what rights they have. Indeed, the path to becoming conscious adults and to an education that respects rights and freedoms is for them to know their rights and to integrate the freedoms that flow from those rights into every aspect of their lives. Children's rights education is necessary to raise children who know their rights and can actively use them in their lives. In its broadest sense, children's rights education is about teaching children about their rights, which derive from the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children's rights education aims to utilize and protect children's rights and create sensitivity to children's rights in order to meet the child's developmental needs (Uçuş-Güldalı, 2017). Children's rights education also plays a preventive role in protecting children from neglect, abuse and violence (Akyüz, 2018). Children's rights education is necessary to understand and respect the rights of others, create a better school environment, understand the relationship between rights and responsibilities, and become a developed citizen who is useful to society (Covell, Howe, & Polegato, 2011). Flowers (2007, p. 25) identifies the main points of children's rights education as understanding and explaining our fundamental rights, valuing oneself and others, recognizing one's rights in daily life and respecting the rights of others, respecting and valuing differences, and developing children's capacities by ensuring their protection.

One of the obligations imposed on States by the Convention on the Rights of the Child is to communicate the principles and obligations of the Convention. Article 42 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children should be taught about the rights of the child, that this is an obligation of the Convention, and that States should assume this responsibility. On the other hand, Article 29 of the Convention states that education on children's rights should be provided in accordance with the principles and rights stated in the Convention. In the current educational system, children's rights education is not organized as a separate course. However, life and social studies curricula, as well as Turkish and mathematics curricula, cover topics directly related to children's rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There are also activities in the textbooks related to the relevant outcomes. In addition, the Human Rights, Citizenship and Democracy course, which is taught as a compulsory subject in grade 4 of elementary school, includes the topics of children's rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as activities related to these topics. Children's rights education is an important tool for social and cultural change, as it is able to understand and promote, expand and deepen rights and responsibilities. Therefore, with children's rights education, generations will grow up embracing and using their rights, thus increasing the importance and value attached to children's rights in countries and laying an important foundation for building a democratic society.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The child paradigm in contemporary societies adopts three basic principles: The first is that every child should have a good start in life; the second is that they should receive quality education; and the third is that their potential should be developed and socialized in line with their abilities (Gençdoğan & Bay, 2007, p. 279). In the context of these basic principles, the Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the rights of the child to live in welfare, to be protected from maltreatment and to develop himself/herself.

Children are generally seen as minors who are inadequate to meet their needs and in need of protection and attention. For this reason, children are generally expected and accepted to behave under

the leadership of adults and as they expect or determine. However, children are independent individuals and should experience life for themselves by doing and living. Yavuzer (1994, p. 26) states that children are not a reduced adult model, but independent individuals equipped with their own unique intelligence and personality traits. Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt (2014) also state that the idea of seeing children as adults is a problematic approach and that they think it would be a more accurate approach to accept children as individuals who experience the process of becoming human.

Children are not passive beings preparing for adulthood, but active individuals who develop and experience their own agency and prepare for life. Therefore, children need to learn about children's rights in order to construct a life appropriate to their childhood. Children need to learn their rights, as guaranteed in the Universal Convention on the Rights of the Child, in order to create their own independent social world, to access what is good and beautiful, and also to access what is in their best interests. From the point of view of the new sociology of childhood, this situation is extremely meaningful. Because according to the new sociology of childhood, children are the subjects of their own representation. Therefore, they need to learn about their rights and the freedoms arising from these rights and apply them in their daily life routines in order to have experiences appropriate to their childhood experiences. In terms of creating these opportunities, while they are dependent on adults in terms of education systems, school and home environments, they have the freedom to choose their own educational platforms and create their own learning environments with technological developments.

The sociology of childhood generally recommends measures to improve the status of the child within the spectrum of rights (Güçlü, 2016). Within the framework of the rights granted to children in the current convention and in the context of the new sociology of childhood, it is important to provide opportunities for children to create and experience their own constructions. Here, adults need to act as guides and realize that children, unlike adults, need to advance their biological existence within their own special needs. Because children are subjects who need to reach the most true and beautiful under controlled conditions.

Education on the rights of the child aims to prepare children to live with others in their communities, families, and individual relationships (Washington, 2010). However, the current Convention on the Rights of the Child defends the rights of the child based on a universal child created with concepts that correspond to the Western social order. It does not take into account the culture, internal dynamics and characteristics of different societies. For this reason, Western sociologists demand that childhood must be rethought and analyzed, because only in this way can the rights of the child be properly understood. The sociology of childhood is needed to draw attention to the denied characteristics of childhood, to determine how the social order can function better, and to provide a basis for children's rights (Güçlü, 2016). Looking at the children of today and the opportunities they have compared to the previous century, it would not be wrong to say that they create their own rules within the order they were born into and that was created for them. Children of elementary school age can make decisions independently of their families and have the opportunity to implement their preferences without being questioned. This is because they are more sensitive and aware of their rights.

In the complex tapestry of our discourse on children and childhood, the new sociology of childhood provides a transformative lens. It shifts our perceptions from passive recipients to active participants. While we've outlined this paradigm shift in understanding childhood, it is imperative to emphasise its implications for educating for children's rights. This modern sociological approach not

only informs our understanding of childhood, but also reshapes child rights education itself. This modern sociological approach not only informs our understanding of childhood, but also transforms child rights education itself. Education should be a dynamic exchange in which children's lived experiences, insights and voices shape the curriculum, rather than a top-down imparting of rights. Only by weaving the principles of the new sociology of childhood into children's rights education can we ensure that children are not only aware of their rights, but also empowered to advocate for them in their unique contexts.

## **Recommendations**

Linking the new sociology of childhood and children's rights education, this theoretical study emphasizes that childhood involves construction in the context of its own reality, rather than treating children as adult miniatures. There is a need for theoretical studies on the reflection of the new sociology of childhood, in which childhood paradigms are shifted from the socialization process to a social and political construction, on pedagogical practice to be linked by educators and educational researchers interested in child education.

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## Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

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## Yeni Çocukluk Sosyolojisi Açısından Çocuk Hakları Eğitimi

### Giriş

Çocuk ve çocukluk üzerine yazılan metinlerde yanıt aranan ya da tanımlanmaya girişilen ana sorulardan biri “Çocuk kimdir?” sorusudur. Bu soruya her bilimsel disiplin ya da bilim dalı kendi perspektifinden yanıtlar vermektedir. Sosyal bilimlerin minvalinden de farklı yanıtlarla karşılaşmak mümkündür. Sosyal bilimleri ilgilendiren kısmı biyolojik bir sınıflamadan ziyade kültürel olarak çocuğa ve çocukluğa yüklenen anlamdır. Çünkü çocukluk psikolojik, sosyolojik, antropolojik ve tarihsel bir kavramdır (Güçlü, 2016). Çocuk ve çocukluk burada ayrılmaktadır. Çocukluk bir inşa sürecidir (Aydoğmuş-Ördem, 2020). Çocuğun biyolojik olarak gelişimi ile birlikte kültürel olarak ele alınması kavramın inşa edilmesine katkı sunmuştur (Akbaş & Topçuoğlu, 2009; Hammersley, 2019). Çocuğun sosyolojik olarak aile olmaya getirdiği anlam, çocuk yetiştirme pratikleri, çocuk beklentisi gibi konular çocukluk kavramının kültürel olarak ele alınmasını zorunlu kılmaktadır. Çocuğun henüz dünyaya gelmeden üstlendiği anlamsal bagaj veya yükler, dünyaya gelişi ile birlikte ana-babasına ya da ebeveynine getirdiği sorumluluklar, çocuğun gelişim görevleri doğrultusunda başarması beklenen davranışların bütünü çocuğu bir ekosistem içerisinde ele alınmasını gerektirmektedir.

Sosyolojik anlamlandırmalar ve kavramsallaştırmalar olmaksızın çocukluğu ortaya koymak zordur. Sosyoloji sosyal bilim dalları içerisinde kurumsallaşma sürecine önce başlayan ve bu süreçte önemli yol kat etmiş bir sosyal bilim dalıdır. Sosyoloji, toplumu incelerken olguları, aktörleri, kurumları incelemeye çalışır. Çocukluk konusunun sosyolojinin ilgi alanı içerisinde girmesi ve çocukluğun araştırmaya değer oluşu sosyal gerçeklik ve kategori olması sebebiyledir (Eraslan, 2019). Sosyoloji, toplumu incelerken kullandığı yöntemler ve anlamlandırmalar nedeniyle bütüncül yaklaşıma dikkat edilen bir bilim dalıdır. Bütüncül yaklaşım açısından bakıldığında ayrıca sosyolojik bir kategori olan ailenin çocukluk açısından da oldukça önemli olması, konuya yönelik ilgiyi de beraberinde getirmektedir (Şirin, 2019).

## Yeni Çocukluk Sosyolojisi

Modern ulus devlet ile birlikte eğitimin iyi vatandaşlar yetiştirme çabaları çocukluğun tanımını da etkilemiştir. Devlet ile halk arasında pedagojik ilişki kurulmuştur. Sosyal bilim disiplinlerinde de “çocuk”un davranışlarının arkasındaki nedenleri bulmaya çalıştıkları pozitivist bir anlayışın egemen olduğu dönem olmuştur (Mayall, 2020). Çocuk yerine çocuklukların yaşandığı bir zaman diliminde genel geçer bir çocukluk olgusu mümkün görünmemektedir (Akbaş & Topçuoğlu, 2009). Tezcan (2012) çocuk sosyolojisi alanına giren konuları kitabında çocuğun eğitimi, toplumsal değişme, disiplin, din, oyun, tatil, akran ilişkileri, toplumsal sorunlar ve şiddet başlıkları altında işlemiştir. Çocuğun gelişim sürecinde etkilendiği ve etkilediği konuların çok yönlü ele alınması birden çok sosyal bilim dalının temel çalışma disiplinine hâkim olmayı gerekli kılmaktadır. Aksi takdirde çocuk ya da çocukluk oldukça dar kapsamlı olarak incelenmiş olur. Örneğin çocukluğun tarihi açısından konuya yaklaşıldığında çocuğun gelişimi açısından farklı toplumlarda ve farklı tarihlerde katedilen mesafenin ne kadar uzun ve meşakkatli olduğu görülecektir (Stearns, 2018). Çocukluğun sosyal teorilerine bakıldığında deterministik modellerden işlevselci ve yeniden üretimci; oluşturmacı yaklaşım açısından Piaget ve Vygotsky 'nin kuramları akla gelmektedir. Corsaro'nun (2015) yorumlayıcı yeniden üretim anlayışı güncelliğini korumaktadır. Yapısal perspektiften çocukluk psikolojik, psikoanalitik ve yaşam deneyimlerini içermektedir. Çocukluk ve çocuklarla çalışmada Corsaro (2015) üç farklı yöntemden söz etmektedir. İlki makro düzey yöntemlerdir. Makro düzey yöntemler demografik çalışmalar, geniş ölçekli taramalar ve tarihsel yöntemlerdir. Mikro düzey yöntemler bireysel ve grup görüşmeleri; etnografi ve sosyo-linguistik analizlerdir. Geleneksel olmayan ya da gelenek dışı yöntemler ise çocukların doğrudan araştırma süreçlerine de müdahil oldukları çalışmaları içermektedir.

## Çocuk Hakları Eğitimi ve İnsan Hakları Eğitimi

### *İnsan Hakları ve Eğitimi*

İnsan hakları; insanların sadece insan olmasından dolayı sahip oldukları kabul edilen hakların tümüdür. İnsan hakları, insanın insan olması nedeniyle sahip olduğu evrensel ilke ve kurallar bütünüdür (Gülmez, 2001). Bütün insanlar din, dil, ırk, cinsiyet ayrımı olmaksızın sözü edilen tüm temel haklara sahiptir. İnsan hakları bütün insanlığa hitap ettiği için evrenseldir. Yeşil'e (2002) göre insan hakları, insanlar arasında herhangi bir ayırım yapılmadan insanlık onurunun gereğinden kaynaklı, bütün insanların yalnızca insan olmalarından dolayı sahip olduğu haklardır. İnsan hakları kavramını Şen (2021, s. 464) “her türlü fikir ve eylemi savunmak, eleştirmek ve düzeltmek için başvuru gücü ve etkili bir söylem” olarak tanımlamıştır.

Türkiye’de hızlı devletleşme ve vatandaşlık bilgisini işleme bağlamında insan hakları eğitimi ile ilgili cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarından itibaren çeşitli çalışmalar yapılmıştır. İlk başlarda insan hakları ayrı bir ders olarak okutulmasa da ana derslerin kazanımlarına ait ara disiplinlerde atıf yapılarak gerçekleştirilmeye çalışılmıştır. İnsan hakları ve vatandaşlık ile ilgili konular 1. sınıftan itibaren bir ara disiplin olarak ele alınmış ve ilgili kazanımlar ilköğretim 1, 2 ve 3. sınıflarda hayat bilgisi; 4, 5, 6 ve 7. sınıflarda ise sosyal bilgiler derslerinde yer alan kazanımlarla ilişkilendirilmiştir (Sağlam & Hayal, 2015).

1995 yılında “Vatandaşlık ve insan hakları eğitimi” dersi 8. sınıflarda okutulmaya başlanmıştır. Ayrıca ortaöğretim kurumları ders programına “Demokrasi ve İnsan Hakları” seçmeli dersi eklenmiştir (Gökburun, 2007, s. 91). 005-2006 eğitim öğretim yılında vatandaşlık ve insan hakları eğitimi dersi

kaldırılmış ve insan haklarına ilişkin kazanımların ilkökulda hayat bilgisi ve sosyal bilgiler, ortaokulda T.C inkılâp tarihi ve Atatürkçülük ders kazanımları ile ilişkilendirilerek kazandırılması hedeflenmiştir. 2015-2016 öğretim yılından itibaren ise ilkökul 4. sınıflarda insan hakları, yurttaşlık ve demokrasi dersi zorunlu bir ders olarak okutulmaya başlanmıştır (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2015). Şimdilerde insan hakları eğitimi ortaokullarda T.C. inkılâp tarihi ve Atatürkçülük dersi ile 8. sınıflarda haftada iki ders saati zorunlu, ilkökullarda insan hakları, yurttaşlık ve demokrasi dersi ile 4. sınıflarda haftada iki ders saati zorunlu olarak okutulmaktadır. Liselerde ise demokrasi ve insan hakları dersi adı altında seçmeli olarak okutulabilmektedir (ttkb.meb.gov.tr).

İnsan hakları eğitimi ailede başlar ve çocuğun sosyal yaşamı boyunca maruz kaldığı toplumsal gelişmelere uygun bir şekilde devam eder. Dolayısıyla çocuğun içine doğduğu aile, devam ettiği okul ve bulunduğu sınıf ortamı, öğretmeni ve arkadaşları kısacası sosyal çevresi insan haklarını öğrenmede son derece etkilidir. İnsan hakları eğitiminden bahsedebilmek için öncelikle çocuk hakları eğitiminden bahsetmek gereklidir. Çünkü her birey çocukluk yaşantılarından geçerek yetişkinliğe doğru ilerler.

### ***Çocuk Hakları ve Eğitimi***

Çocukların hak sahibi bireyler oldukları, bu haklarının uluslararası hukuk ile korunması gerektiği düşüncesinden yola çıkarak çocukların korunmasına ilişkin bir örgütün kurulması çağrısı uluslararası alanda ortaya atılmış olsa da yaşanan savaşlar ve politik gelişmeler nedeniyle bu çağrı tam anlamıyla karşılığını bulamamıştır. Savaş ortamında en çok çocukların zarar görmesi çocukların korunması gerektiği düşüncesini zamanla daha önemli hale getirmiş ve uluslararası düzeyde çalışmalar gündeme gelmeye başlamıştır.

Bu çalışmalardan günümüzde de hala geçerliliğini koruyan ve 196 ülke tarafından imzalanan Birleşmiş Milletler Çocuk Hakları Sözleşmesi çocuk hakları bağlamında uluslararası düzeyde kabul görmüş en kapsamlı ve geçerli sözleşmedir. Çocuk Haklarına Dair Sözleşme, 20 Kasım 1989'da Birleşmiş Milletler Genel Kurulu'nda oy birliği ile kabul edilmiştir. Türkiye de bu sözleşmeyi 27 Ocak 1995 tarihinde onaylamıştır. Çocuk Hakları Sözleşmesi'nden yola çıkıldığında çocuk hakları; dünyadaki tüm çocukların doğuştan sahip olduğu; yaşama, korunma, gelişme ve katılım gibi haklarının hepsini birlikte tanımlamakta kullanılan evrensel kavramdır. Çocuk hakları, Birleşmiş Milletler tarafından 20 Kasım 1989'da dünya çocuklarının yaşam kalitesini hak ettikleri düzeye çıkarmak amacıyla 54 madde olarak yayınlanan Çocuk Hakları Sözleşmesi'nin tüm çocuklara verdiği yetki ve kazançlardır.

Çocuk hakları sözleşmesinin devletlere getirdiği yükümlülüklerden biri de sözleşme ilke ve yükümlülüklerinin öğretilmesidir. Çocuk hakları sözleşmesinin 42. maddesinde çocuk haklarının, çocuklara öğretilmesi gerektiği ve bu durumun sözleşmenin bir yükümlülüğü olduğu ve devletlerin bu sorumluluğu alması gerektiği belirtilmektedir. Diğer yandan sözleşmenin 29. maddesinde de çocuk hakları eğitiminin sözleşmede bahsedilen ilkeler ve haklar doğrultusunda yapılması gerektiği belirtilmiştir.

Günümüz eğitim sisteminde bağımsız bir ders olarak çocuk hakları eğitimi yapılmamaktadır. Ancak en fazla hayat bilgisi ve sosyal bilgiler dersi öğretim programlarında olmak üzere Türkçe ve matematik dersi öğretim programlarında doğrudan çocuk hakları ve çocuk hakları sözleşmesi ile ilgili kazanımlar yer almaktadır. Ders kitaplarında da ilgili kazanımlara ait etkinlikler bulunmaktadır. Ayrıca ilkökul 4. sınıfta zorunlu ders olarak okutulan insan hakları, yurttaşlık ve demokrasi dersi konularında çocuk hakları, çocuk hakları sözleşmesi ve bu konulara ait etkinlikler yer almaktadır. Çocuk hakları

eğitimi, sosyal ve kültürel değişim için önemli bir araçtır çünkü hak ve sorumlulukları anlama ve destekleme, genişletme ve derinleştirme kapasitesine sahiptir. Dolayısıyla çocuk hakları eğitimi ile haklarını benimseyen ve kullanan kuşaklar yetişmeye başlayacak ve böylece ülkeler özelinde de çocuk haklarına verilen önem ve değer artarak demokratik bir toplum oluşturma yolunda önemli temel atılmış olacaktır.

## **Tartışma ve Sonuç**

Çağdaş toplumlarda çocuk paradigması üç temel ilkeyi benimser: Birincisi; her doğan çocuğun hayata iyi bir başlangıç yapması; ikincisi, nitelikli eğitim alması; üçüncüsü ise her çocuğun yeteneği doğrultusunda potansiyellerinin geliştirilmesi ve sosyalleştirilmesidir (Gençdoğan & Bay, 2007, s. 279). Çocuk hakları sözleşmesi ile bu temel ilkeler bağlamında çocuğun refah içinde yaşaması, kötü muameleden korunması ve kendini geliştirebilmesi amacıyla yapabilecekleri garanti altına alınır.

Çocukluğun sosyolojisi genel olarak haklar yelpazesinde çocuğun statüsünü iyileştirecek önlemleri önerir (Güçlü, 2016). Mevcut sözleşmede bahsedilen ve çocuklara verilen haklar çerçevesinde ve yeni çocukluk sosyolojisi bağlamında düşünüldüğünde, çocukların kendi inşalarını yaratmalarını ve deneyimlemelerini sağlayıcı fırsatlar sunulması önemlidir. Burada yetişkinlerin birer yol gösterici olarak davranmaları ve çocukların yetişkinlerden farklı olarak kendi özel gereksinimleri içinde biyolojik olarak da varlıklarını ilerletmek durumunda olduklarını kavramaları gerekmektedir. Çünkü çocuklar kontrollü şartlar altında en doğru ve güzele ulaşması gereken öznelerdir.

Günümüzde temel hak ve özgürlüklerin çocuklara tanıtılarak öğretilmesi yaşadığımız çağın en büyük gerekliliklerinden biridir. Bireyin kendisini her yönden geliştirebilmesi, yaşadığı çevreyi, toplumu, dünyayı anlayabilmesi, sorunlarına yaratıcı çözümler bulabilmesi, topluma yararlı bir birey olup sorumluluk üstlenebilmesi öncelikle kendi hak ve özgürlüklerini öğrenerek hak bilinci geliştirmesine bağlıdır (Covell & Howe, 1999). Çünkü günlük hayat rutinleri içerisinde meydana gelen toplumsal gelişmeleri anmanın ve çözümleyebilmenin yolu evrensel demokratik tutum ve değerler üzerinden yapılmaktadır. Dolayısıyla demokratik tutum ve değerler geliştirmede çocukluk çağından başlayarak haklar eğitimi ile adım atmanın önemi büyüktür.

Çocuk hakları eğitimi çocukları içinde buldukları toplumda, ailelerinde ve bireysel ilişkilerinde diğerleriyle birlikte yaşamalarına hazırlamayı amaçlar (Washington, 2010). Ancak mevcut çocuk hakları sözleşmesi batılı toplumsal düzene uygun kavramlarla oluşturulmuş evrensel bir çocuk üzerinden hakları savunur. Farklı toplumların kültürünü, iç dinamiklerini ve özelliklerini dikkate almaz. Bu nedenle batılı sosyologlar çocukluğu yeniden düşünmek ve analiz etmek gerektiğini, ancak bu şekilde çocuk haklarının doğru olarak anlaşılabilceğini belirtmektedirler. Çocukluğun inkâr edilmiş özelliklerine dikkati çekmek, sosyal düzenin nasıl daha iyi çalışacağını belirlemek, çocuk hakları konusunda bir temel sağlamak için çocukluğun sosyolojisine ihtiyaç vardır (Güçlü, 2016).

## **Öneriler**

Yeni çocukluk sosyolojisi ve çocuk hakları eğitiminin birbiriyle ilişkilendirildiği bu kuramsal çalışmada çocukların yetişkin minyatürü olarak ele alınmasından ziyade çocukluğun kendi gerçekliği bağlamında bir inşa edilişi barındırdığına vurgu yapılmaktadır. Çocukluk paradigmasının sosyalizasyon sürecinden sosyal ve politik bir inşa edilişe yöneldiği yeni çocukluk sosyolojisinin eğitim pratiklerine yansımalarına yönelik kuramsal çalışmaların çocuk eğitimi ile ilgilenen alan eğitimcileri ve eğitim bilimciler tarafından ilişkilendirilme ihtiyacı bulunmaktadır.