



Attitudes of Fathers Who Have Children in Preschool Period Towards Their Children's Sexual Development

Okul Öncesi Dönemde Çocuğu Olan Babaların Çocuklarının Cinsel Gelişimlerine Yönelik Tutumları

Arş. Gör. Sıla UZKUL ¹, Prof. Dr. Ayşe Dilek ÖĞRETİR ÖZÇELİK ²

Abstract

Sexual development begins in the mother's womb and is affected by other environmental factors, especially parental attitude, with birth. This research aims to reveal fathers' attitudes on sexual development and the demographic variables (child's age, child's sex, number of children, father's age, father's education level, socioeconomic level) that affect these attitudes. This study is in the quantitative research approach and the descriptive model. The study group consists of 190 fathers who have children aged 3-6. The data were collected on the internet by using the 'Information Form' and the 'Parental Attitude Scale'. While analyzing the data, independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, and Tukey test analysis were used. According to the findings, it is seen that there is a significant relationship between the variables of child's sex, number of children, father's education level, socioeconomic level, and fathers' attitudes towards sexual development. There was no significant relationship between the age of the father, the age of the child, and the father's attitude. It is seen that the mean scores of the fathers' attitudes towards sexual development are in the range of neutral-positive attitudes. While fathers generally had a positive attitude towards children's sexual questions and sexual behaviors, they had a negative attitude towards social norms.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sexual development, father attitude, preschool period, child

Paper Type: Research

Öz

Cinsel gelişim anne karnında başlar ve doğumla birlikte başta ebeveyn tutumu olmak üzere diğer çevresel faktörlerden de etkilenir. Babalar, cinsel gelişim sürecinde çocuklarına rol model olurlar ve çocukların sağlıklı bir özdeşim kurmalarına yardımcı olurlar. Ayrıca babaların çocukları ile cinsel iletişim kurmaları çocukların gelecekteki cinsel davranışlarını da etkileyerek onları cinsel risklerden uzak tutmaktadır. Bu nedenle babaların cinsellik konusunda iletişime açık olmaları ve olumlu bir tutum sergilemeleri oldukça önemlidir. Bu araştırma, babaların cinsel gelişime yönelik tutumlarını ve bu tutumları etkileyen demografik değişkenleri (çocuğun yaşı, çocuğun cinsiyeti, çocuk sayısı, babanın yaşı, babanın eğitim düzeyi, sosyoekonomik düzeyi) ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, nicel araştırma yaklaşımında ve betimsel modeldedir. Çalışma grubu 3-6 yaş arası çocuğu olan 190 babadan oluşmaktadır. Veriler internet ortamında, 'Bilgi Formu' ve 'Ebeveyn Tutum Ölçeği' kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde bağımsız örneklem t-testi, tek yönlü ANOVA ve Tukey testi analizi kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgulara göre çocuğun cinsiyeti, çocuk sayısı, baba eğitim düzeyi, sosyoekonomik düzey değişkenleri ve babaların cinsel gelişime yönelik tutumları arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu görülmektedir. Babanın yaşı, çocuğun yaşı ve babanın tutumu arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunamamıştır. Babaların cinsel gelişime yönelik tutum puan ortalamalarının nötr-olumlu tutum aralığında olduğu görülmektedir. Babalar çocukların cinsel soruları ve cinsel davranışlarına karşı genellikle olumlu bir tutum sergilerken, sosyal normlara karşı olumsuz bir tutum sergilemişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cinsel gelişim, baba tutumu, okul öncesi dönem, çocuk

¹Bitlis Eren Üniversitesi, Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi, salis@beu.edu.tr

²Gazi Üniversitesi, Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi, ogretir@gazi.edu.tr

Atf için (to cite): Uzkul, S. ve Öğretir Özçelik, A. D. (2023). Attitudes of fathers who have children in preschool period towards their children's sexual development. *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 25(1), 74-87.

Makale Türü: Araştırma

Introduction

Sexual development, which begins in the womb, gains a psychological, sociological, economic even political, and religious dimension with the birth of the child. Over time, it is shaped by the culture it is in and becomes layered and multicolored. While some cultures see sexuality as a natural part of human life, such as eating and drinking, some cultures treat it as a topic that should not be talked about. In some countries, sexuality is an issue that every adult knows and experiences but is ignored. Today, with the development of technology, these privacy limits are gradually disappearing. Adolescents and children access true or false sexually explicit information through television and the internet. Children cannot be expected to have a healthy sexual development with incorrect or late information. For this reason, when children begin to ask questions about sexuality (at the age of 2-3), parents need to answer them through positive communication, attitude, and correct information. However, when it comes to answering the child's questions about sexuality, it can be said that educators and parents go around this issue. Considering the reasons behind this, parents in Turkey think that they are insufficient in sexual education (Eliküçük and Sönmez, 2011; Konur, 2006), and they stated that they felt anxious, restless, uncomfortable, and excited while answering their children's sexual questions because of this feeling of inadequacy (Bayrak, Başgöl and Gündüz, 2011; Eroğlu and Gölbaşı, 2005; Tuzcuoğlu and Tuzcuoğlu, 1996; Tuğrul and Artan, 2001). Parents often answer questions from their children with hearsay information (Ersoy, 1999). There are findings in the literature that some parents do not prefer to talk about sexuality with their children, ignore the questions children asked about sexuality and cover it up (Ersoy, 1999; Ceylan and Çetin, 2015; Tuğrul and Artan, 2001). The negative attitude, tension, facial expressions, tone of voice of parents can create the feeling of making a mistake because the child is asking questions, and can give a message so that she/he does not ask questions on this subject again. Thus, the vicious circle of parents who do not answer and children who do not ask begins. In addition to parents who feel inadequate about sexual education and do not want to talk about it, some parents state that this education is not suitable for childhood, that sexual education given at an early age can lead to a tendency to crime, and that the sexual knowledge of children is sufficient, and therefore sexual education is not necessary (İşler and Gürşimşek, 2018).

Despite the negative attitudes of parents towards sexual education for children, appropriate sexual education given at an early age provides the basis for complex information to be given during adolescence and provides preliminary preparation to the child (Çalışır, 2014). As changes occur in the child's body during adolescence, the child with prior knowledge experiences less anxiety and fear, while developing wrong attitudes and behaviors is prevented (Çerçi, 2013). Sex education reduces these risks by acting as a shield against pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases in adolescence (Corcoran and Michael, 2000; Coyle, Pawan and Rumey, 1999; Eisenberg, Bernat, Bearinger and Resnick Bearinger, 2008; Kirby, 2002; Kirby, Laris and Rolleri, 2007; Kohler, Manhart and Lafferty, 2008). One of the most striking aspects of sexual education for children is the issue of sexual abuse. The child, who learns sexual information correctly, can distinguish between false and correct information, identify good and bad touch, and learn how to protect herself/himself from sexual abuse (Çerçi, 2013). With sexual education, the child knows his body, learns not to harm his own body and the bodies of others, discovers how to respect the opposite sex as well as herself/himself, learns interpersonal relationships, body image, gender roles, and finally acquire responsible behavior about sexuality (Adegoke, 2003; Collins, 2008; Çerçi, 2013; SIECUS, 2001).

Sex education not only provides many benefits to the child but also supports the parents. Sex education teaches parents how to respond to sexuality and how to behave. In the studies, mostly mothers' knowledge levels and attitudes about sexuality were measured and it was seen that mothers took part in sexual education (Mobredi, Hasanpoor-Azghady, Azin, Haghani and

Farahani, 2018; Martin, Riazi, Firoozi and Nasiri, 2018; Woody, Randall and D'Souza, 2008). Studies involving fathers are quite limited and the influence of fathers on this issue is ignored. However, although the care and education during childhood are generally seen as the mother's duty, the role of fathers in all developmental areas of children is quite large.

1. Sexual Development and The Role of Fathers

According to the psychosexual theory, children enter the phallic stage between the ages of three and six. According to Freud, libido (pleasure) is in the genital area in the phallic period, so children in this age group are open to exploration of their bodies and genital organs (Freud, 1965). They are curious about their own bodies and those of others, try to learn, and ask sexual questions. Due to the Oedipus and Electra complexes seen in the phallic period, children may be attracted to their opposite-sex parents, show jealousy, and want to marry their parents. These behaviors are appropriate for sexual development seen in this period (Freud, 1965). Erikson (1950), the founder of the psychosocial theory, stated that children in this age group are in the period of Initiative vs. Guilt. Like the psychosexual theory, this theory emphasizes that children in the age group of three and six are interested in their genitals, and therefore they can ask their families and people around them questions about sexuality (Erikson, 1950). If the child's interest in the environment is supported and his questions are answered during this period, the child's entrepreneurship is supported. If their questions and behaviors are condemned and met with a negative attitude, the child may feel guilty (Erikson, 1950). The child may think that wondering is a crime. When psychosexual and psychosocial theories are examined, it is seen that children between the ages of 3-6 are curious about sexuality and are open to exploration. Although children do not see sexuality as adults, the questions they ask and the behaviors they exhibit may cause a change in the attitudes of parents. Children may derive different messages from their parents' attitudes that are different from normal, and these messages may affect their sexual behavior in adolescence or adulthood (Meschke, Bartholomae and Zentall, 2000). Verbal communication by parents about sexuality (Miller et al., 1998), establishing warm and devoted relationships with their children, and taking a controlling and regulating role in children's activities are related to children's future sexual behavior (Kincaid, Jones, Sterrett and McKee, 2012; Mellins et al., 2011; Miller, Benson, and Galbraith, 2001; Parkes, Henderson, Wight and Nixon, 2011). When it comes to talking to children about sexuality and answering their questions, studies show that there are sexist lines in this regard. Mothers usually talk to their daughters and fathers to their sons about it (DiIorio, Kelley and Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999; DiIorio, Pluhar and Belcher, 2003; Wyckoff et al., 2008). However, the child's sexual development should be positively supported by both parents. Parental control and correct and positive communication about sexuality with the child increase the effective use of birth control methods (Campero, Walker, Atienzo, and Gutierrez, 2011; Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2011; Wight and Fullerton, 2013) and start sexual intercourse later. Adolescents who have more sexual contact with their parents have been found to be less likely to become pregnant or contract a sexually transmitted infection (Scott et al., 2011; Secor-Turner, Sizing, Eisenberg, and Skay, 2011; Tolman and McClelland, 2011).

Little is known about the role of fathers in reducing the potential negative consequences of early sexual intercourse (e.g. sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy). Some studies show that love and support from fathers is important for the positive development and well-being of adolescents (Harris, Furstenberg and Marmer, 1998; King and Sobolewski, 2006). A few studies show that adolescents who have close relationships with their father or stepfather tend to delay sexual activity (Regnerus and Luchies, 2006; Burns, 2008) and are less likely to have sex during adolescence (Menning, Holtzman and Kapinus, 2007).

The influence of fathers on the sexual development of their children varies depending on the amount of time the father spends with the child (Brown, Mangelsdorf and Neff, 2012; Wood, McConnell, Moore, Clarkwest and Hsueh, 2012), the quality of the relationship (Kimberly and Linton, 2017). As the time spent by the father with the child increases, the timing

of the child's first sexual intercourse is also affected and delayed. The quality of the father-child relationship influences the child's later views of responsible sexuality (Kimberly and Linton, 2017). Talking about sexuality with the father helps the child to talk about sexual matters more comfortably in their future relationships. Fitzharris and Werner-Wilson (2004) also emphasize the importance of fathers discussing sexual health with their children. These talks emphasize the importance of discussion, not its quality.

Fathers become role models for their children in the sexual development process and help children establish a healthy identification. In addition, the sexual communication of fathers with their children also affects the future sexual behavior of children, keeping them away from sexual risks. For this reason, it is very important for fathers to be open to communication about sexuality and to have a positive attitude. This research was planned to reveal how the attitudes of fathers who have children in the preschool period towards sexual development and how they change according to demographic variables and the sub-objectives of the research are listed below;

- What are the attitudes of fathers who have children between the ages of 3-6, towards sexual development?
- Is there a relationship between children's demographic variables (sex, age, number of children) and fathers' attitudes towards sexual development?
- Is there a relationship between fathers' demographic variables (age, education level, income level) and their attitudes towards sexual development?

2. Materials And Methods

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study is in the quantitative research approach and the descriptive model. Participants are 190 fathers who have children aged 3-6, who voluntarily participated in the study. Descriptive statistic findings of children and their fathers' are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic variables

Variables		N	%
Age of Father	18-35	92	48,4
	35 and above	98	51,6
Father Education Level	Associate degree and below	56	29,5
	Undergraduate	91	47,9
	Postgraduate	43	22,6
Socioeconomic Level	Low	61	32,1
	Middle	57	30
	High	72	37,9
Number of Children	1	82	43,2
	2	84	44,2
	3 and above	24	12,6
	3	56	29,5
	4	51	26,8
Age of Child	5	41	21,6
	6	42	22,1
Sex of Child	Girl	90	47,4
	Boy	100	52,6

Ninety-two of the participants (48.4%) are between the ages of 18-35. Ninety-seven of the participants (%51.6) are over 35 years old. Fifty-six of the participants (%29.5) graduated from an associate degree or below, ninety-one of the participants (%47.9) graduated from undergraduate, and forty-two of the participants (%22.6) graduated from postgraduate. The socioeconomic level of sixty-one of fathers (32.1%) is low, fifty-seven of them (30%) is middle, and seventy-one of them (37.9%) is high. Eighty-two of fathers (43.2%) have one child, eighty-

four of them (44.2%) have two children, and twenty-three of them (12.6%) have three or more children. Considering the ages of their children, fifty-six of them (29.5%) are three years old, fifty of them (26.8%) are four years old, forty-one of them (21.6%) are five years old, and forty-two of them (22.1%) are six years old. Ninety of the children (47.4%) are girls, and ninety-nine of them (52.6%) are boys.

2.2. Materials

To collect data in this study, the Information Form prepared by the researchers and the "Parental Attitude Scale" developed by Eser and Çeliköz (2008) were used.

2.2.1. Information Form

In the form, there are questions about the father's age, education level, socioeconomic level, and the sex and age of the children.

2.2.2. Parental Attitude Scale

This scale was prepared to measure the attitudes of parents who have children in the preschool period towards their children's sexual development. The scale is 5-point Likert type. Participants indicate their level of agreement for each question on the scale by ticking one of the options "I strongly disagree, I do not agree, I agree moderately, I agree, I completely agree". There are 26 items on the scale, 10 of which are positive, and 16 of which are negative expressions. While questions 4, 8, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22 and 25 are positive in the scale; questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 21, 23, 24 and 26 are reverse scored. The lowest score that can be obtained from the scale is 26, while the highest score is 130. As the score obtained from the scale increases, the positive attitude also increases. The total variance explanation rate of the scale for measuring the additional factor is 40.24%, and the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient is .90.

2.3. Data Collection and Analyses

The data were collected through an 'internet survey' (Arıkan, 2011), which is one of the data collection methods. The scale was uploaded to the online survey portal Qualtrics, and a link was created to reach the scale. Scale link has been made suitable for all mobile devices. This link has been shared on these sites after obtaining the necessary permissions from the site administrators in the relevant social media accounts. The data were obtained from 190 fathers and were interpreted with independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, and Tukey test statistical methods.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

It was decided to use the 'Parental Attitude Scale' to determine the sexual attitudes of fathers, and the scale usage permission was obtained from Prof. Dr. Nadir Çeliköz, who developed this scale, via e-mail on 11.11.2020. Before the application process of the scale, Gazi University Ethics Committee was applied, and the permission of the necessary ethics was obtained at the meeting dated 03.08.2021 and numbered 12, with the research code 2021-740. All participants were informed about the research with a consent form, and their consent was obtained.

3. Results

The research findings were examined under two main headings: fathers' attitudes towards sexual development and demographic variables affecting them.

3.1. Fathers' Attitudes Towards Sexual Development

Considering the scores obtained from the parental attitude scale applied to learn the attitudes of fathers towards sexual development, the lowest score was 61, the highest score was

119, and the average was 90.69. According to this average score, it can be said that fathers exhibit a neutral-positive attitude.

It was determined by the researcher that the scale questions covered three of the seven sub-titles that should be included in sexual education by WHO. To make the results section more understandable, the answers given by the fathers to the scale questions were examined in three groups determined by researcher; children asking questions about sexuality, their sexual behaviors, and social norms.

3.1.1. Attitudes Towards Sexual Questions

82% of fathers met their children's asking questions about sexuality with a positive attitude, 91% of fathers stated that they would answer the child's question, and 86% stated that they would not be indifferent to the question. 86.4% of the fathers think that the parents should answer the child's sexual questions together. Although fathers want to answer children's questions, 58.4% of fathers have difficulty in answering these questions, and despite their positive attitudes, 65% consider sexual education as the mother's duty. 85.8% of fathers stated that they would help their children to satisfy their sexual curiosity. It can be said that fathers have a very positive attitude towards sexual questions.

3.1.2. Attitudes Towards Sexual Behaviors

Considering the attitudes of fathers towards childhood masturbation, 85.3% think that punishment should not be given to children who masturbate. 76.9% of the fathers stated that they would give the necessary explanation to the masturbating child. When the child wets the bed, 96.8% of the fathers stated that they would not punish the child. It can be said that fathers have a very positive attitude towards sexual behaviors.

3.1.3. Attitudes Towards Social Norms

While watching TV with their children, 85.3% of the fathers stated that they would turn off the TV if there was a sexual image. 36.3% of the fathers stated that 36.3% of the fathers stated that they would not allow their boys and girls to sleep in the same room, 72.1% said that they did not bath their children, 74.7% of the fathers stated that they would get angry with their children when their child undressed in front of others, and 90.5% would help the child to get dressed if he undressed in front of someone else. It can be said that fathers generally exhibit a negative attitude towards social norms.

3.2. The Relationship Between Demographic Variables and Father's Attitudes

Independent sample t-test was conducted to examine fathers' attitudes on sexual development according to the children's sex and the fathers' age. According to the test results about the children's sex, it was seen that the mean score of fathers with girls was $\bar{x}=88.43$, and the mean score of fathers with boys was $\bar{x}=92.73$. According to these findings, it was concluded that fathers' attitudes on sexual development differ significantly according to the sex of their children (Table 2). It has been concluded that fathers with boy children have a more positive attitude towards sexual development in the 3-6 age period.

Table 2. T-Test results of fathers' attitudes on sexual development by child sex

Sex	N	\bar{x}	Sd	T	P
Girl	90	88.43	11.53	-2.74	.007
Boy	99	92.73	10.05		

p<0.05

Looking at Table 3, it is seen that the mean score of fathers aged 18-35 is $\bar{x}=90.18$, while the mean score of fathers aged 35 and over is $\bar{x}=91.17$. According to this, fathers' attitudes on sexual development do not show a statistically significant difference according to their age.

Table 3. T-Test results of fathers' attitudes on sexual development by fathers' age

Father Age	N	\bar{x}	Sd	T	P
18-35	92	90.18	11.68	-.62	.53
35 and above	98	91.17	10.28		

p<0.05

The attitudes of the fathers on sexual development according to the age of children, the number of children, fathers' education level, and socioeconomic level were examined by using one-way ANOVA test. According to these findings, it was concluded that fathers' attitudes on sexual development differed significantly according to the child number, father's education level, and socioeconomic level. Fathers' attitudes on sexual development do not show a statistically significant difference according to the child's age.

When Table 4 is reviewed, it is seen that the number of children significantly affects the father's attitude. Tukey test was performed to see the direction of the effect. According to the test result, the mean score of fathers with one child was $\bar{x}=92.43$, the mean score of fathers with two children was $\bar{x}=90.65$, and the mean score of fathers with three or more children was $\bar{x}=84.87$. According to the Tukey test, there is a significant difference between the scores of fathers with a child and two children and fathers with three or more children. Fathers with one or two children have a more positive attitude towards sexual development.

Table 4. ANOVA results of fathers' attitudes on sexual development by number of children

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	1162.48	2	531.24	4.58	.01
Within Groups	21661.80	187	115.83		
Total	22724.29	189			

p<0.05

In Table 5, it is seen that the education level of the father significantly affects the father's attitude. Tukey test was performed to see the direction of the effect. According to the test results, the mean score of fathers with associate degrees and below education level was $\bar{x}=84.35$, the mean score of fathers with an undergraduate degree was $\bar{x}=92.58$, and the mean score of fathers with a postgraduate education is $\bar{x}=94.95$. According to the Tukey test, fathers with undergraduate and postgraduate education levels have more positive attitudes towards sexual development than fathers with associate degrees and below education levels.

Table 5. ANOVA results of fathers' attitudes on sexual development by father's education level

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	3353.39	2	1676.69	16.18	.000
Within Groups	19370.08	187	103.58		
Total	22724	189			

p<0.05

Looking at Table 6, it is seen that socioeconomic level significantly affects the father's attitude. Tukey test was performed to see the direction of the effect. According to the test results, the mean score of fathers with low socioeconomic level was $\bar{x}=87.04$, the mean score of fathers with middle socioeconomic level was $\bar{x}=90.29$, and the mean score of fathers with high socioeconomic level was $\bar{x}=94.07$. According to the Tukey test, as fathers' socioeconomic level increases, their positive attitudes towards sexual development also increase.

Table 6. ANOVA results of fathers' attitudes on sexual development by socioeconomic level

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	1653.19	2	826.59	7.33	.001
Within Groups	21071.10	187	112.68		
Total	22724	189			

p<0.05

Discussion

In this study, the attitudes of fathers with children between the ages of three and six towards sexual development in the preschool period and the relationship of these attitudes with demographic variables were examined. Considering the research findings, it can be said that fathers have a neutral-positive attitude towards their children's sexual development. Parents exhibited neither completely negative nor positive attitudes.

Turkish fathers do not have enough knowledge in the field of sexual development (Baysan, 2020; Bayrak, Başgöl and Gündüz, 2011; Erođlu and Gölbaşı, 2005; Tuzcuođlu and Tuzcuođlu, 1996; Tuđrul and Artan, 2001) but it can be said that they do not ignore the sexual development of their children. While they respond positively to their children's asking sexual questions, the majority of fathers state that they do not ignore these questions and try to answer them. In a study conducted by Tuzcuođlu and Tuzcuođlu with mothers and fathers in 1996, 50% of parents stated that they could not answer their children's sexual questions because they did not know. In a study conducted by Açıkgöz (1999) in Zonguldak, it was found that most of the families could not adequately answer their children's questions about sexuality. Kayabaşı (2019) conducted a study with mothers who had children in primary school in Bolu province and stated that 68.7% of mothers had difficulty in answering the questions their children asked. The study by Baysan (2020) with parents reveals that 58.3% of parents find their children's sexual questions normal, 52.2% want to answer their children's sexual questions and satisfy their curiosity, but 53.3% have difficulties in answering children's sexual development questions. In this study, although fathers have a positive attitude towards sexual questions, they actually have difficulties in answering the questions and they think that this is the mother's duty. Although the role of paternity is changing today, in this study, fathers assign sexual education duty to the mother. In Baysan's (2020) study, it was seen that mothers were more interested in the sexual education of their children.

Masturbation is one of the most common sexual behaviors observed in children aged 3-6 years. More than 75% of the fathers participating in the study showed a positive attitude towards masturbation behavior and stated that they would not punish their children. When we look at the limited number of studies on this subject, in the study of Tuzcuođlu and Tuzcuođlu (1996), 50.7% of the parents stated that they got angry and shouted and 24.7% of them gave punishment. It can be said that it has been 26 years since Tuzcuođlu and Tuzcuođlu's work and during this time Turkish fathers developed a more positive attitude towards masturbation. Current researchs shows that negative parental reactions such as punishing and embarrassing the child about masturbation are few (Baysan, 2020).

When we look at the social norms on sexuality, it can be said that the fathers in this study have a negative attitude. Similarly, in previous studies, fathers had a negative attitude towards sexual images on television (Baysan, 2020) and the majority of fathers were angry with the child when their children undressed in front of others (Çankırı, 2018). Although fathers try to support their children's sexual development today, their lack of knowledge on this subject may cause them to exhibit negative attitudes. Since children are open to discovering their bodies and the bodies of others in the 3-6 age group, they may want to undress in front of others and want to examine both their own and someone else's body. This behavior is quite normal in the developmental processes of children. When the child exhibits such behavior, it will be a more

positive attitude for the father to explain without offending the child. There may be content (such as sexual intercourse, violence) that is not suitable for the development of the child in the movies and series watched on television, for this, parents should pay attention to whether the content of the program is suitable for the child, and the age warning sign on the TV. Behaviors such as turning off the TV and closing the child's eyes in movie scenes that include sexual behaviors such as kissing and hugging will give secret messages to the child. It will be a more positive attitude to behave normally and comfortably in sexual behaviors that are suitable for the development of the child.

Looking at the effect of demographic variables on fathers' attitudes towards sexual development, a significant relationship was found between the child's sex, the number of children, father's education level, socioeconomic level, and father's attitude towards sexual development. No significant relationship was found between the father's age, the child's age, and the fathers' attitudes.

Considering the sex variable, in this study, it was seen that fathers with boys exhibited more positive attitudes. The reason for this may be that fathers know the male body and its development better can empathize with sexual development and can communicate more easily with their boys on this subject. In Turkish society, fathers take nude pictures of their boys and show them to their friends and families. When it comes to boys, we can say that there is a cultural comfort and a more positive attitude towards sexuality. In the research conducted by Baysan (2020), 77.8% of the fathers stated that they should be separated according to the sex of the child and that an explanation about sexuality should be given to the children. They stated that parents who have boys should be given sexual education by fathers at a higher rate. In the study of Acer and Artan (2000), on the other hand, it was thought that the normal welcoming and ignoring behaviors of parents who had boys were more, and the behavior of playing with the genitals of boys was normal considering the culture. It is seen that the rate of saying that it is shameful and dirty is higher in parents who have daughters. İldeş (1990) interviewed 303 mothers and 303 fathers in a study conducted to determine the attitudes, behaviors, and reactions of the parents of preschool children about sexuality and sexual education. It has been determined that mothers and fathers believe more in the need for sexual education for boys than girls, and mothers believe in the necessity of sexual education more than fathers. Downie and Coates (1999) investigated the effect of sex on sexual communication at home and the educational practices of parents. As a result of the study, it was determined that parents continue their traditional roles in raising children and accept the double standard in society. It turned out that while parents talked to boys about sexual exploration issues, they talked to girls about psychological and protection issues. It was found that fathers talked to boys more than girls about forbidden words and girls more than boys about rape. Koblinsky and Atkinson's study (1982) revealed that fathers participate less in girls' sexual education than mothers. El-Shaieb and Wurtele (2009) found in their research that there were differences between boys and girls in the plans of parents to talk about certain topics. This research and other studies in the literature show that fathers feel closer to their boys about sexuality and display a more positive attitude. However, Acer and Artan's (2000) study showed us that 54.9% of boys in the 3-4 year age group ask their mothers questions about sexuality. Since children do not attach meanings to sexuality like adults, we cannot say that boys especially prefer the father/girls prefer the mother in the questions they ask during their sexual development process. For this reason, we recommend that the parent who is asked a question should give a correct and appropriate explanation for the child's development.

If we look at the other variables that affect the father's attitude, as the education level and socioeconomic level of the father increase, the scores of attitudes towards sexual development also increase positively. It can be thought that as the education level of the father increases, his knowledge about child sexual development also increases. Parallel to the findings of this study, Acer and Artan's (2000) study also found that the highest rate (65.2%) of parents

with a graduate education found their children's sexual questions normal and answered. Makol-Abdul et. al.'s (2010) work showed that mothers with more academic education had a positive attitude toward sex education. There are also studies showing the opposite of these studies. According to the research conducted by Baysan (2020), it was observed that the relationship between the views of parents about their children's sexual education and their educational status was not statistically significant. In the studies conducted by Göçgeldi, Tüzün, Türker, and Şimşek (2007) and İşler (2017), it was seen that there was no significant difference between the monthly income of parents and their views on sexual education. Studies in the literature differ on this issue. Studies on this subject are very limited. Especially the ones with fathers are even less, thus we can reach more enlightening results by working with more people.

Another remarkable finding of the study is that as the number of children increases, the father's attitude towards sexual development is negatively affected. The reason for this may be that as the number of children increases, the time spent by the father with the child decreases, he has less information about the individual development of the child, and spare less time for his/her questions. Another finding of the study is that the age of the father and child does not have a significant effect on the attitude of the father. In the study conducted by Lu (1994), there is no statistically significant difference between the sexual education views of Taiwanese parents who have preschool children and the ages of their children. Although studies on this subject are quite limited, Lu's study supports this finding.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This research shows that fathers who have children between the ages of 3-6 in Turkey have a neutral-positive attitude towards sexual development. Fathers' attitudes are affected by child's sex, the number of children, father's education level, socioeconomic level, which shows that it is not affected by father's age and child age. Based on the results of this research, our recommendations for teachers and researchers are;

- Fathers should be supported educationally to have a more positive attitude. If men's sexual development knowledge levels increase, they can approach girls and boys more empathetically. Parent training can be provided for this in kindergartens or adult education on sexuality can be provided for parents in pre-school education, child development, psychology, and other relevant departments of universities.
- Groups can be formed (for example in kindergartens) where parents can talk and discuss their children's sexual development and questions. With these conversations, sexual development can become more open and talkable.
- The participants of this study were limited to 190 fathers, paternal attitudes can be examined with a larger study group.
- This study can be done with another attitude scale developed for sexual development and its results can be compared.

References

- Acer, D. ve Artan, İ. (2000). The analysis of questions asked by children of three and four-year-old group related to sex and the answers given by mothers. *Journal of Uludag University Faculty of Education*, 13(1), 191-204.
- Açıkgöz, N. (1999). *3-6 Yaş çocukları için hazırlanan bir cinsel eğitim programı ve etkileri* (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi). Marmara Üniversitesi, İstanbul.
- Adegoke, R. (2003). Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning. *American Psychologist*, 58(6-7), 466-474.
- Arıkan, R. (2011). *Araştırma yöntem ve teknikleri*. Ankara: Nobel Yayınları.

- Bayrak, G., Başgül, Ş. S. ve Gündüz, T. (2011). *Ailede cinsel eğitim: çocuk ve ergen eğitiminde rehber kitap*. İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları.
- Baysan, M.P. (2020). *Knowledge, level, and attitudes of parents whose children's age is between 3 and 6 about child sexual development and education* (Unpublished masters of arts dissertation). İstanbul Medipol University, İstanbul.
- Brown, G. L., Mangelsdorf, S. C. and Neff, C. (2012). Father involvement, paternal sensitivity, and father-child attachment security in the first 3 years. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 26(3), 421-430. doi:10.1037/a0026588
- Burns, V.E. (2008). Living without a strong father figure: a context for teen mothers' experience of having become sexually active. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 29(3), 279–297.
- Campero, L., Walker, D., Atienzo, E. E. and Gutierrez, J. P. (2011). A quasi-experimental evaluation of parents as sexual health educators resulting in delayed sexual initiation and increased access to condoms. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34, 215–223. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2010.05010
- Ceylan, Ş. ve Çetin, A. (2015). Sexual education is given to the families of three –to five-year-old children attending a preschool education institution and its analysis. *Hacettepe University Faculty of Health Sciences Journal*, 2(3), 41-59.
- Collins, F.S. (2008). Developing an understanding of gender-sensitive care. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 40(1), 69-77.
- Corcoran, C. and Michael, G. (2000). Tackling socioeconomic inequalities in health. *The Lancet*, 362(93), 1409-1414.
- Coyle, D., Pawan, K. and Rumei C. (1999). Learning about sex: Results from Natsal Health Education and Behavior. *Health Education and Behavior*, 33(6), 802-811.
- Çalışır, D. (2014). *Cinsel Eğitim Çocuktan Ergenliğe*. İstanbul: Profil Kitap.
- Çankırı A. (2018). *Okul öncesi dönem çocuklarının cinsel eğitimi ile ilgili anne baba görüşlerinin incelenmesi* (Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi). Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi, Çanakkale.
- Çerçi, G. (2013). *Investigating knowledge level and attitudes of families with mentally retarded children towards their sexual development and education* (Unpublished masters of arts dissertation) Dokuz Eylül University, İzmir.
- DiIorio C., Pluhar E. and Belcher L. (2003). Parent-child communication about sexuality: a review of the literature from 1980–2002, *Journal of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Education for Adolescents and Children*, 5(3/4):7-32.
- DiIorio C, Kelley M and Hockenberry-Eaton M, Communication about sexual issues: mothers, fathers, and friends, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 1999, 24(3):181–189.
- Downie, J. and Coates, R. (1999). The impact of gender on parent-child sexuality communication: Has anything changed? *Sexual and Marital Therapy*, 14(2), 109-121.
- Eisenberg, M. E., Bernat, D. H., Bearinger, L. H. and Resnick, M. D. (2008). Support for comprehensive sexuality education: Perspectives from parents of school-age youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 42(4), 352-359.
- El-Shaieb, M. and Wurtele, S. K. (2009). Parents' plans to discuss sexuality with their young children. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, 4(2), 103-115.

- Eliküçük, A. and Sönmez, S. (2011). Examination of opinions of parents about sexual development and education six years old children. *Journal of Family and Society Education-Culture and Research*, 7 (25), 45- 62.
- Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and Society* (pp. 251–263). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Eroğlu, K. ve Gölbaşı, Z. (2005). The importance of parents in sexual education: what are they doing, what are they feeling? *Atatürk University Nursing School Journal*, 8(2), 12-21.
- Ersoy, Ö. (1999). Opinions and attitudes of parents who have girls and boys in the 6-year-old group about sexual education. *Journal of Vocational Education*, 1(1), 19-29.
- Eser, M. ve Çeliköz, N. (2009). Impacts of parental attitude towards sexual identity development on child's sexual identity development. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1(1), 1408-1413.
- Fitzharris, J. L. and Werner-Wilson, R. J. (2004). Multiple perspectives of parent-adolescent sexuality communication: Phenomenological description of a Rashoman effect. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 32, 273–288.
- Freud, S. (1965). *Normality and Pathology in Childhood: Assessment of Development*. New York: International University Press.
- Göçgeldi, E., Tüzün, H., Türker, T. ve Şimşek, I. (2007). The investigation of attitudes of parents of preschool children towards sexual education. *Journal of Continuing Medical Education*, 16(9), 134-142.
- Guilamo-Ramos, V., Bouris, A., Jaccard, J., Gonzalez, B., McCoy, W. and Aranda, D. (2011). A parent-based intervention to reduce sexual risk behavior in early adolescence: Building alliances between physicians, social workers, and parents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 48, 159–163. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2010.06.007
- Harris, K.M., Furstenberg, F.F. and Marmer, J.K. (1998). Paternal involvement with adolescents in intact families: the influence of fathers over the life course. *Demography*, 35(2), 201–216.
- İldeş, N. (1990). *Okul Öncesi dönemdeki (3-6) yaş çocukların anne-babalarının cinsellik ve cinsel eğitim konusundaki inanış ve uygulamaları ile çocukların cinselliğe ilişkin meraklarına karşı genel tutum, davranış ve tepkilerin incelenmesi*. (Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi). Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Ankara
- İşler, S. ve Gürşimşek, A. I. (2018). Parents' opinions about the necessity of sexual education for 3-6 years old children. *Gazi University Journal of Gazi Educational Faculty*, 38(3), 843-867.
- Kayabaşı, E. (2019). *İlkokul Öğrencilerinin Annelerine Yönelik Hazırlanan Cinsel Gelişim Eğitimi Programının Etkililiğinin Sınanması*. (Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi). Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi, Bolu.
- Kimberly, C. and Linton, R. D. (2017). How time with a father relates to child's sexual health. *The Family Journal*, 25(2), 196-203.
- Kincaid, C., Jones, D. J., Sterrett, E. and McKee, L. (2012). A review of parenting and adolescent sexual behavior: The moderating role of gender. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 32, 177–188. doi:10.1016/j. cpr.2012.01.002
- King, V. and Sobolewski, J.M. (2006). Nonresident fathers' contributions to adolescent well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(3), 537–557.

- Kirby, C. (2002). *Do abstinence-only programs delay the initiation of sex among young people and reduce teen pregnancy?* Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.
- Kirby, D.B., Laris B.A. and Rolleri, L.A. (2007). Sex and HIV education programs: their impact on sexual behaviors of young people throughout the world. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 40(3), 206–217.
- Koblinsky, S. and Atkinson, J. (1982). Parental plans for children's sex education. *Family Relations*, 31(1), 29-35.
- Konur, H. (2006). *Dört -Altı Yaşları Arasında Çocuğu Olan Anne-Babalara Verilen "Cinsel Eğitim Programı" nın Cinsel Gelişim ve Cinsel Eğitim Konusundaki Bilgilerine Etkisinin İncelenmesi.* (Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi). Gazi Üniversitesi, Ankara.
- Lu, W. V. (1994). Parental Attitudes toward Sex Education for Young Children in Taiwan.
- Makol-Abdul, P.R., Nurullah, A.S., Imam, S.S. and Rahman, S.A. (2010). Parents' attitudes towards inclusion of sexuality education in Malaysian schools. *International Journal about Parents in Education*, 3(1), 42–56.
- Martin, J., Riazi, H., Firoozi, A. and Nasiri, M. (2018). A sex education program for mothers in Iran: Does preschool children's sex education influence mothers' knowledge and attitudes? *Sex Education*, 18(2), 219-230.
- Mellins, C. A., Tassiopoulos, K., Malee, K., Moscicki, A. B., Patton, D., Smith, R. and Seage, G. R. (2011). Behavioral health risks in perinatally HIV-exposed youth: Co-occurrence of sexual and drug use behavior, mental health problems, and nonadherence to anti-retroviral treatment. *AIDS Patient Care and STDs*, 25, 413–422. doi:10.1089/apc.2011.0025
- Menning, C., Holtzman, M. and Kapinus, C. Stepfather involvement and adolescents' disposition toward having sex, *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2007, 39(2):82–89.
- Meschke, L. L., Bartholomae, S. and Zentall, S. R. (2000). Adolescent sexuality and parent-adolescent processes: Promoting healthy teen choices. *Family Relations*, 49, 143–154.
- Miller, B. C., Benson, B. and Galbraith, K. A. (2001). Family relationships and adolescent pregnancy risk: A research synthesis. *Developmental Review*, 21, 1–38.
- Miller, K. S., Kotchik, B. A., Dorsey, S., Forehand, R. and Ham, A. Y. (1998). Family communication about sex: What are parents saying and are their adolescents listening? *Family Planning Perspectives*, 30, 218–235.
- Mobredi, K., Hasanpoor-Azghady, S. B., Azin, S. A., Haghani, H. and Farahani, L. A. (2018). Effect of the sexual education program on the knowledge and attitude of preschoolers' mothers. *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research*, 12 (6), 6-9.
- Kohler, P.K., Manhart, L.E. and Lafferty, W.E. (2008). Abstinence-only and comprehensive sex education and the initiation of sexual activity and teen pregnancy. *Journal Adolescent Health*, 42 (4), 344–351.
- Parkes, A., Henderson, M., Wight, D. and Nixon, C. (2011). Is parenting associated with teenagers' early sexual risk-taking, autonomy and relationship with sexual partners? *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 43, 30–40. doi:10.1363/4303011
- Regnerus, M.D. and Luchies, L.B. (2006). The parent-child relationship and opportunities for adolescents' first sex. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27 (2), 159–183.

- Scott, M. E., Wildsmith, E., Welti, K., Ryan, S., Schelar, E. and Steward-Streng, N. R. (2011). Risky adolescent sexual behaviors and reproductive health in young adulthood. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 43, 110–118. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2007.00441.x
- Secor-Turner, M., Sieving, R. E., Eisenberg, M. E. and Skay, C. (2011). Associations between sexually experienced adolescents' sources of information about sex and sexual risk outcomes. *Sex Education*, 11, 489–500. doi:10.1080/14681811.2011.601137
- Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) (2001). 'Sexuality education in the schools: Issues and Answers.' SIECUS Report, 29 (6).
- Tolman, D. L. and McClelland, S. I. (2011). Normative sexuality development in adolescence: A decade in review, 2000-2009. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21, 242–255. doi:10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00726.x
- Tuğrul, B. and Artan, İ. (2001). Research of mothers' opinions about the children's sexual education. *Hacettepe University Faculty of Education Journal*, 20, 141-149.
- Tuzcuoğlu, N. Ve Tuzcuoğlu, S. (1996). Çocuğun cinsel gelişiminde ailelerin karşılaştıkları güçlükler. *Marmara University Atatürk Education Faculty Journal of Educational Sciences*, 8(8), 251-262
- Wight, D. and Fullerton, D. (2013). A review of interventions with parents to promote the sexual health of their children. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 52, 4–27. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.04.014
- Wood, R. G., McConnell, S., Moore, Q., Clarkwest, A. and Hsueh, J. (2012). The effects of building strong families: A healthy marriage and relationship skills education program for unmarried parents. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 31, 228–252. doi:10.1002/pam.21608
- Woody, J. D., Randall, A. D. and D'Souza, H. J. (2008). A sex education program for mothers: Effects, parent characteristics, and practice insights. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, 3(1), 39-64.
- Wyckoff, S.C., Miller, K.S., Forehand, R., Bau, J., Fasula, A.M., Long, N. and Armistead, L. (2008). Patterns of sexuality communication between preadolescents and their mothers and fathers, *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 2008, 17(5), 649–662.

ETİK ve BİLİMSEL İLKELER SORUMLULUK BEYANI

Bu çalışmanın tüm hazırlanma süreçlerinde etik kurallara ve bilimsel atıf gösterme ilkelerine riayet edildiğini yazar(lar) beyan eder. Aksi bir durumun tespiti halinde Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi'nin hiçbir sorumluluğu olmayıp, tüm sorumluluk makale yazarlarına aittir. Yazarlar etik kurul izni gerektiren çalışmalarda, izinle ilgili bilgileri (kurul adı, tarih ve sayı no) yöntem bölümünde ve ayrıca burada belirtmişlerdir.

Kurul adı: Gazi Üniversitesi Etik Komisyonu

Tarih: 03.08.2021

No: 12

ARAŞTIRMACILARIN MAKALEYE KATKI ORANI BEYANI

1. yazar katkı oranı : %80

2. yazar katkı oranı : %20