ANALYZING SOCIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

ÇOCUKLARDA SOSYAL KİMLİK GELİŞİMİNİN İNCELENMESİ

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ABSTRACT

There are social interactions between the person and others. These interactions lead to the social identity development process. The social identity of the child starts to be shaped within the family, school and close social environment during early childhood. The purpose of this study was to determine the social identity development of the five years old preschool children. The differences between girls and boys were also tested. The sample consisted of 125 female and 125 male five years old age preschool children. Dumans SKD Social Identity Rating Scale was applied for data collection purposes. Arithmetic means and standard deviations were used descriptively and t-Test was applied for the group differences. Results showed that children's social identity development needs to be supported and there were no significant differences between girls' and boys' developmental levels.

Keywords: preschool, social identity, children

ÖZET

Kişi ve çevresindeki diğer insanlar arasında sosyal etkileşimler vardır. Bu etkileşimler sosyal kimliğin gelişim sürecine öncülük eder. Çocuğun sosyal kimliği erken çocukluk döneminde aile, okul ve yakın sosyal çevre içinde şekillenmeye başlar. Bu çalışmanın amacı, beş yaşındaki okul öncesi dönem çocukların sosyal kimlik gelişimlerini belirlemektir. Çalışmada ayrıca kız ve erkek çocukların gelişimleri arasındaki farkta test edilmiştir. Çalışmanın örneklemi 125 kız ve 125 erkek çocuğu olmak üzere beş yaş grubu anaokulu çocuklarından oluşmuştur. Veri toplama aracı olarak Dumans SKD Sosyal Kimlik Derecelendirme Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Betimsel olan bu çalışmada aritmetik ortalama ve standart sapma değerleri hesaplanmış ve gruplar arası puan farkı için t-Testi uygulanmıştır. Sonuçlar, çocukların sosyal kimlik gelişimlerinin desteklenmesi gerektiğini ve kız ve erkek çocukların puanları arasında anlamlı bir fark olmadığını göstermiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: anaokulu, sosyal kimlik, çocuk

1. INTRODUCTION

Identity is one person's self-identification and positioning himself/herself among other people or groups (Bilgin, 2007). One's perception of his/her identity is related to how s/he evaluates himself/herself. The evaluations of other groups and people constitute the external perception of one's personality. There is a tendency in people that they are divided into groups and each group perceives their group as superior to other groups (Brehm & Kassin, 1993). Hence, social identity derives from the knowledge of the individual's perception of self in a social group or membership of groups (Tajfel, 1982). People give this membership value and also attribute a meaning.

An individual takes part in society as himself/herself. There are social interactions between the person and others. During the formation of identity, social relations lead an individual to a certain social group. As a result of two-way interactions, an individual desires to hold positive characteristics of himself and the group to which he belongs (Hogg & Ridgeway, 2003). Being a member of a group or social category is the main requirement of social identity. Individuals who have similar situations and common social environments naturally develop comparable social identities. Social identity is shaped in the process of bonding with the social group, identification, and partnership. This process leads a person not to develop a related identity with the social groups that unconnected (Goffman, 2009). Therefore, age, gender or ethnicity are the important factors in determining social identity development (Giddens, 1999). In addition, interactions that occur at the level of the home, school, neighborhood, nation, and state range affect an individual's social identity development at different degrees (Giddens, 2005). It is necessary for an individual's happiness that he both keeps his characteristics and the harmony within the groups in the development of social identity.

The social identity of the child starts to be shaped within the society especially within the framework of the values coming from the family, and communication with others during early childhood. The values that come from the family and the communications with the close social environment are the building blocks of social identity. Individuals form their social identities by identifying themselves with the group they place (Demirtaş, 2003). Society brings new competences to the child while imposing new responsibilities during the maturation process (Erikson, 2014). The needs of the child are sheltered by the family, schools and community structures. The child naturally finds his life cycle in social life. Therefore, culture has a significant impact on the development of children's social identity. Cultural structures guide and shape the child's psychosocial development. When a child does not have a positive or appropriate image of herself/himself, this lack of development could be due to the structure of the social group (Condor, 1990).

Early childhood is an important period in shaping the development of social identity. Every child starts to develop a social identity. This identity is shaped by the values of family and communication with others. It is important to follow the social identity development of children in this period because foreign educational materials, cartoons, characters, and books are used extensively.

2. METHODS

This research's model is the screening model. The screening model aims to describe the current conditions as they appear (Karasar, 2018). The researcher does not interfere with the circumstances of the study subject during the research. Children's social identity development levels were determined as they emerged in this study.

2.1. Population and Sampling

The target population of the study consisted of preschool children in Istanbul province, Turkey. A stratified random sampling method was used as the sampling procedure. This method of sampling involves the division of a population into smaller sub-groups known as strata (Neuman, 2007). There were fifty preschools located and accepted to participate in the study in the city center of Istanbul. Ten of these schools were randomly selected and students who have middle socio-economic classes were also randomly selected according to gender equivalence. The sample of the study was 250 children (125 girls and 125 boys) attending preschool classrooms.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

Dumans SKD Social Identity Rating Scale was used in order to determine children's social identity development. Dumans SKD scale was designed to use for 4 to 6 years old children's social identity

development. There are two sub-dimensions, characteristics of the child and characteristics of the social environment, in the scale (Duman, 2019). There is a total of 43 items including 22 items towards the child and 21 items towards the child's social environment. Right answers are given one point and wrong answers are given zero. Therefore, one participant can only get a maximum score of forty-three.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

This is a descriptive study delving five years old preschool children's social identity development. This development was also investigated comparatively based on gender. The application of the scale takes an average of forty minutes for a child. Scale items are completed based on the child's answers, observation and teacher views. SPSS (22.0) was used for data analyzing purposes. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to present descriptive data. To analyze the significant differences in social identity development between girls and boys, the t-Test ($p<0.05$) was conducted.

3. RESULTS

This study aimed to determine five years old children's social identity development. Table 1 presents the distribution of children.

Table 1. Numbers of the students contributed to the study

Gender	Age Group	f	%
Girl	5	125	50
Boy	5	125	50
Total	5	250	100

According to Table 1, there were 125 children in each category presenting equal distribution (%50) between gender groups. There were a total of 250 children contributed to the study.

Table 2. Preschool children's social identity development levels

Sub-Dimension	Girls			Boys		
	Score	x	sd	Score	x	sd
Child's Characteristics	1504	12.03	4.03	1517	12.13	4.07
Social Environment	1508	12.06	3.98	1514	12.11	4.02
Social Identity	3012	24.09	4.02	3031	24.24	4.05

Table 2 shows the preschool children's test results of social identity and its sub-dimensions. It has been found that the female group of preschool children had a total score of 1504 for the child's characteristics dimension and 1508 for the social environment dimension. Their total score for the social identity was 3012. These children's arithmetic mean value was 12.03 for the child's characteristics dimension and 12.06 for the social environment dimension. They had the arithmetic mean value of 24.09 for social identity development. It also has been found that the male group of preschool children had a total score of 1517 for the child's characteristics dimension and 1514 for the social environment dimension. Their total score for the social identity was 3031. These children's arithmetic mean value was 12.13 for the child's characteristics dimension and 12.11 for the social environment dimension. They had the arithmetic mean value of 24.24 for social identity development. Results showed that both groups' scores and values were quite close to each other.

Social Identity Group	n	$\bar{x}$	sd	t
Girls	125	24.09	4.02	.284
Boys	125	24.24	4.24	
p<0.05				

Table 3 presents female and male children's t-Test results of social identity scores. It has been seen that both groups' arithmetic mean value was rather close (24.09 and 24.24). The t-Test result (.284) also indicated that there wasn't a significant difference ($p>0.05$) between two groups of children's

social identity scores. It can be explained that both female and male children have similar social identity development levels.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the social identity development of children. Social interactions and learning opportunities help children in the process of structuring social identity. In this study, both girls and boys had similar social identity development levels. The social identity scale was divided into two sub-dimensions: Child's characteristics and social environment. Children in both groups presented similar results in these dimensions as well. Children performed better in the subjects of birthday, family elders, and friendship related to the child's characteristics domain. They also achieved better results in the subjects of playground, shopping, schools, professions, classroom rules, and group play behaviors. Their knowledge was at a low level in terms of physical properties, learning centers, house rules, and official and religious holiday experiences.

This study showed that there is still space needs to be supported in the development of social identity development. Köker (1997) stated that age is a notable factor for identity development. As the age of children increases, their feeling of identity develops. The knowledge of being would help children in future years during their identity development process. The results of this study showed that there weren't significant differences in social development between girls and boys. Gavas (1998) also found that gender is not a significant indicator for the identity development process as well. Several studies found that both woman and man follows a similar identity development process as well (Lapsley, Rice & Fitzgerald, 1990; Shaw, Kleiber & Caldwell; 1995). On the other hand, it has been stated that social skills have a positive correlation with the process of social identity development (Purtaş, 2019). Therefore preschool children's social activities and interactions should take into consideration during their education.

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