



How Attachment, Independence and Resilience Skills Affect Well-Being During Childhood: Mothers' Views

Çocukluk Döneminde Bağlanma, Bağımsızlık ve Dayanıklılık Becerilerinin İyi Oluşu Etkilemesi: Anne Görüşleri

Kezban Özgem¹ 

1. Cyprus International University, Faculty of Education, Nicosia, North Cyprus. E-mail: kozgem@ciu.edu.tr

Abstract

Secure attachment during childhood, the sense of independence gained and the resilience that comes with it, the correct and effective completion of developmental processes, the emergence of positive personality traits in children, the strengthening of these traits, and the satisfaction and pleasure felt from all experiences bring about the child's well-being. Psychological well-being does not only deal with one aspect of the child, but also aims to improve the child holistically by addressing his/her cognitive, emotional and psychological aspects. The aim of the study is to examine the characteristics of preschool children's attachment, independence and resilience skills and well-being. In this purposeful research, a case study based on qualitative data was conducted with semi-structured interview technique in order to examine the well-being characteristics of mothers with preschool children. The research was analyzed using the content analysis method. The research was conducted face to face with 50 mothers of preschool children in the 2022-2023 period. According to the findings, It has been concluded that children who have a secure attachment with their mothers have good physical contact and communication with their mothers, and that children who have a secure attachment have good independence, can solve their own problems, recognize, care about the emotions of others, and all of these are reflected in the child's happiness.

Keywords: Attachment, Child, Independence, Resilience Well-Being.

Öz

Çocukluk döneminde geçirilen güvenli bağlanma, kazanılan bağımsızlık duygusu ve beraberinde gelen dayanıklılık, gelişim süreçlerinin doğru ve etkili tamamlanması çocuğun iyi olma halini etkilemektedir. Bunların yanında çocuklardaki olumlu kişilik özelliklerinin ortaya çıkması bu özelliklerin güçlenmesi ve tüm yaşantılardan duyulan memnuniyet ve haz çocuğun iyi olma halini beraberinde getirmektedir. Psikolojik iyi oluş çocuğun sadece bir yönü ile ilgilenmez bilişsel duygusal ve psikolojik yönlerini de ele alarak bütünsel olarak iyileştirmeyi hedefler. Araştırmada okul öncesi dönem çocuklarının bağlanma, bağımsızlık ve dayanıklılık becerileri ile iyi oluş arasındaki özelliklerin incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Bu amaca yönelik araştırmada okul öncesi dönem çocuğuna sahip olan annelerle çocukların iyi oluş özelliklerini incelemek amacıyla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği ile nitel verilere dayalı bir durum çalışması yapılmıştır. Araştırma içerik analiz yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma 2022-2023 döneminde, okul öncesi çocuğuna sahip 50 anne ile yüz yüze yapılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgulara göre; anneleri ile güvenli bağlanma gerçekleştiren çocukların anneleri ile beden temasının ve iletişiminin iyi olduğu, güvenli bağlanmayı gerçekleştiren çocukların bağımsız olma, kendi problemlerini çözebilme, başkalarının duygularını fark edebilme ve önem verme, tüm bunların çocuğun mutlu olma durumuna yansıdığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bağımsızlık, Bağlanma, Çocuk, Dayanıklılık, İyi oluş.



Introduction

Preschool, is the period in which the child immediately develops and child's intelligence, perception, personality, social behavior and mental abilities change at a high rate (Ruhm & Waldfoger, 2011). The most important part of brain development occurs during this period. Preschool children are inquisitive, curious, imaginative and researchers. Preschool period is one of the most important periods for the child's development. This period lays the foundation for the child's learning experiences, well-being and productivity in later years. Depending on how the development areas of preschool children support the time they spend, it creates fundamental traces that will continue throughout their lives and shape the individual's life to a great extent (Bredenkamp, 2015; Unicef 2003).

One of the most important and critical principles of the preschool period is attachment. Ainsworth and Bowlby (1999), stated that the period in which children's needs are met appropriately, adequately and on time in the preschool period, a safe base is created for children, and thus, the child is prepared to explore the world with confidence, is the attachment period (Ainsworth and Bowlby, 1999). Attachment is a situation that begins in the first days of life, has an emotional side, and is possible. The concept of attachment in infancy refers to the fact that the baby reacts positively to the first person he or she physically touches, wants to spend all his time with them, looks for that person in case of any fear, and that this person gives the baby peace, tranquility and trust (Erkuş 1994).

A process that starts from the beginning of pregnancy and continues throughout the birth and postpartum period has a great impact on mother-baby bonding. Attachment during infancy is seen in stages. It begins immediately after birth and takes shape until the twenty-fourth month (Kaplan et al. 1994).

As children develop, their ability to overcome events on their own, to express themselves more easily, and to explore their environment without depending on anyone develop. Over time, they see that they have an impact on their environment and that they can control it. This sense of independence improves their self-confidence and supports their self-perception in a positive way. As their sense of being able to do things on their own develops, they realize that they are successful. When children are given the opportunity to choose and their responsibilities begin to increase, they realize that they have a more active role in their family and society (Şahin and Akman, 2018).

Starting from early childhood, it is an appropriate time to start teaching children how to cope with problems and stand on their own feet (Şahin and Akman, 2018). This is a period in which children gain their first skills and learning about real life. For this reason, it is necessary to provide independence skills at an early age in order to prepare the child for real life (Çakırtaş, 2023). Independent children feel the pleasure of being able to do their work on their own and experience the confidence of being able to stand on their own feet. Self-confidence is the key to success for our children (Çakırtaş, 2023). Independence is about freedom, discipline and responsibility. A child can be independent only when he or she is free, and can be free only if they are independent. The more confidently a child can explore his or her environment, the better he or she will be able to tackle their developmental tasks. It can create new skills that will support expanding the understanding of independence (Güneş, 2013).

Preschool period, where the foundations of children's development in all areas are laid, is the most important period of life. All the work done for children during this period is very important for them to become successful and healthy individuals. All children have the ability to cope with challenges and stress. This is not something that children have or do not have, but a skill that they develop as they grow. Resilient children are more likely to take healthy risks because they aren't afraid of falling short of expectations. They are individuals who are curious, brave and trust their instincts. They know their limits

and push themselves out of their comfort zones. This helps them achieve their long-term goals while also enabling them to solve their problems independently (Şahan Aktan and Önder, 2018). Resilience is the capacity to be prepared for adversities, to cope with stress and trauma, to adapt to difficult conditions, and to cope by learning from devastating experiences. It is both mental and physical endurance and flexibility. Psychological resilience is the ability to get back on your feet after difficult situations. In short, we can call it the immune system or protective shield of the soul. The American Psychological Association defines resilience as the ability to adapt well to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threat or stress. Being able to perform high performance under stress, despite stress, shows psychological resilience (Eryılmaz, 2021). For a healthy and successful generation, the concept of psychological resilience should be prioritised in the preschool period (Şahan Aktan and Önder, 2018).

In early years, childhood begins with the family. Both mother and father provide the child with different characteristics and competencies in every aspect. Parents are primarily the ones who will consciously ensure that the child acquires valuable and good characteristics. During the socialization process, children learn the culture and values of the geography they live in and gradually become a member of the society (Hops, 1983; Tsukerman, 2000).

When the factors affecting the mental and spiritual structure of the child in the first years of life are examined, the concept of "social and emotional well-being" attracts attention (Abed et al., 2016). Although the concepts of well-being and happiness are intertwined in this way, they are different concepts. Happiness is defined as the state of having rational thoughts by prioritizing the individual's mind and being in balance by using the virtues he has acquired, while well-being is defined as the whole of life attitudes and structures that affect the functionality of the person rather than positive and negative emotions (Ryff, 1989; Telef, 2013). Psychological well-being is also considered an important indicator of the quality of developmental processes and educational practices (Van Sanden and Joly, 2003). High well-being in children is a concept that has components in the areas of self-confidence, self-esteem, social and emotional development, and needs to be evaluated from different theoretical perspectives, including all developmental areas and the child's social relationship contexts (Schweiger and Graf, 2015). It is stated that children are more resilient in the face of difficulties in adulthood, live healthier and longer, are happier in their relationships, are more successful in school and work, and are less likely to be depressed (Best Start Resource Centre, 2018). Therefore, considering that the preschool period creates the developmental infrastructure that will lead to adulthood, the idea that psychological resilience should be supported starting from the preschool period is an indisputable fact. In the literature review, it was seen that studies on psychological resilience were quite limited in the preschool period and that there were mostly studies on adults (Sipahioğlu, 2008). Although there are studies on social skills, emotional regulation, anxiety, emotional intelligence, self-regulation and self-confidence, which are the source of psychological resilience in the preschool period, studies addressing psychological resilience as a whole and measurement tool that can measure psychological resilience in preschool are also quite limited (Önder and Ogelman, 2011).

The results obtained from this research will contribute to the literature on how parental attitudes affect the well-being of children and will raise awareness among parents about the well-being of their children. At the same time, understanding the relationship between the attitudes of mothers and fathers and the well-being of individuals will be beneficial in reducing the effects of negative interactions between parents and children. For these reasons, it is considered important to investigate the relationship between children's attachment, independence and resilience and their well-being. In this regard, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between attachment, independence, resilience and well-being in children and answers were sought to the following questions:

1. What is the social-demographic distribution of mothers and children?
2. What do mothers think about their child's attachment skills?
3. What do mothers think about their child's independence skills?
4. What do mothers think about their child's resilience skills?
5. How does it affect the child's attachment, independence, resilience and well-being skills?

Method

This study was designed as a qualitative study to describe the relationship between preschool children's attachment, independence and resilience skills and well-being, and the case study method was used. In this research, a holistic single case design, one of the case study designs, was used. The holistic single case design is used in three ways by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018) when there was a single unit of analysis (an individual, an institution, a program, a method). Firstly, researchers can use a well-formulated theory or method in the environment to confirm or refute it. Secondly, researchers can use the holistic single-case design to study extreme, contradictory, or unique situations that do not comply with general standards. Finally, the holistic single-case design can be used in cases where no one has studied or reached anyone before. It has been defined as "studying such situations is important in revealing a previously unknown subject for later researchers and providing a basis or guidance for future research" (p.326). This case study aims to consider the natural environment and complexity of the event in-depth (Puch, 2005). It provides the opportunity to examine, understand, and obtain information about the relationship with the participant or society without intervening in the event (Akar, 2016).

Study Group

This study followed a path to make purposive sampling more accessible and faster. 50 parents from the researcher's circle who had preschool children participated in the study. The entire study consists of female parents. Demographic information about the parents is included in Table 1.

Data Collection Tools and Methods

This study was carried out by obtaining the necessary permissions to apply the semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher and a semi-structured questionnaire developed by the researchers was created. Semi-structured interview questions do not allow the researcher to ask predetermined questions to the other person and to move on to other branches based on the answers received (Karasar, 2005; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). By examining the texts of the semi-structured interview form, care was taken to ensure that the questions were not multi-dimensional so that they could be easily understood, were clear, and did not burden the participants with an aimless complexity. The interview form prepared by the researcher was shown to 3 field experts and their opinions were taken into consideration. The statements in the interview form consist of 5 questions prepared for attachment, independence, resilience and well-being in the preschool period. The part of these questions related to attachment skills consisted of questions about whether the child could stay separate from the mother, what kind of physical contact he or she had, and how aware they were of their emotions. Information about the child's independence skills is about the child's ability to avoid being alone, decision-making and problem-solving skills, questions about resilience are about the child's ability to give up, control their emotions and express their feelings clearly, questions about well-being are about the child's awareness of his or her own and others' emotions. The research was conducted face to face in 2022-2023 Spring semester and the qualitative data obtained was analyzed by the researcher using the content analysis method. After the interview transcripts of this study were made, the data obtained from the participants were examined in detail and

divided into sections, and the sections were named and coded by creating meaningful wholes. After all, the data was coded, the researchers created a code list, which made it very easy to examine and organize the data and served as a key list for the researchers. Then, the coding keys and interview transcripts were read separately by the researchers, and the necessary arrangements were made by discussing the issues of consensus and disagreement. The security calculation for the created themes was calculated using Miles and Huberman's (1994) reliability formula. As a result of this calculation, the reliability of the research was calculated as 92% for the first question, 100% for the second question, and an average of 96%, overall. Reliability calculations above 70% are considered reliable for the research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As a result of the reliability test, the data collected here was accepted as reliable for the study, and the codes made by the researchers that were compatible with each other were used as the basis for organizing the data according to the codes and themes in reaching the themes.

Data Analysis

In the descriptive analysis technique, data are evaluated according to predetermined themes, and the results are organized and interpreted. The data obtained in the descriptive analysis are summarized and interpreted under predetermined headings (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018). For this study, a descriptive analysis technique was used to analyze the data.

Results

The themes obtained from the participants' responses were tabulated and interpreted with their frequency distributions. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of attachment, independence and resilience skills on well-being during childhood. For this purpose, the findings obtained from parents' opinions are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio -Demographic Characteristics of Mother and Child

| | N | % |
|-----------------------|----|-----|
| Parent's Age | | |
| 29 and under | 14 | 70 |
| 30-35 | 23 | 46 |
| 36-39 | 9 | 18 |
| 40 and above | 4 | 8 |
| Gender | | |
| Woman | 50 | 100 |
| Male | - | |
| Child's Age | | |
| Five | 4 | 8 |
| Six | 12 | 24 |
| Seven | 16 | 32 |
| Eight | 12 | 24 |
| Child's Gender | | |
| Girl | 27 | 54 |
| Male | 23 | 46 |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|----|
| To school | | |
| Gone / Going | 38 | 76 |
| Didn't go/Doesn't go | 12 | 24 |
| Taking care of the baby | | |
| Mom | 34 | 68 |
| Father | 1 | 2 |
| Mother and father | 1 | 2 |
| Grandma | 5 | 10 |
| Grandmother | 5 | 10 |
| Caregiver | 4 | 8 |
| Maternal Postpartum Depression | | |
| Experienced | 9 | 18 |
| Not experienced | 41 | 82 |

As can be seen in Table 1, all participants in the study are women, the maximum age range is 30-35 years old, and the minimum age group is 40 and over. It is seen that the majority of the children of the participants in the study were girls, their age range was seven at most and at least five years old, the majority of the children received pre-school education, the person who took care of the baby after the birth of the baby was the mother, and almost all of the participants did not experience postpartum depression.

Table 2. Child's Attachment Skills

| Themes | Sample Expressions | N | % |
|-------------------------------------|--|----|----|
| Staying without mother | A13 "He stays with his grandmother without causing any problems." A9 "He can easily stay at grandmas without us." | 34 | 68 |
| Not staying without mother | A30 "can't stay away from me, it will cause trouble." | 16 | 32 |
| Frequent physical contact | A42 "We hug very often" | 26 | 52 |
| Very little physical contact | A32 "Doesn't want to be hugged." | 6 | 12 |
| Awareing of feelings | A29 "He notices immediately when I am sad." | 42 | 84 |

Table 2 shows that more than half of the participating mothers report that their children can stay without them, while a small number of participants mention that their children experience difficulties when separated from them. Additionally, almost all participants indicate that their children are quick to notice their emotions. In terms of physical contact, half of the participants have frequent contact with their children, while a small number of them do not have any physical contact. These findings suggest that some participants may be avoiding physical contact with their children.

Table 3. Child's Independence Skills

| Themes | Sample Expressions | N | % |
|---|--|----|----|
| Playing games on her/his own | A1 “He plays on his own as long as I am around.” | 38 | 76 |
| Solving her/his own problems | A32 “Can handle difficult situations easily” | 28 | 56 |
| Making her/his own decisions | A27 “He makes his own choices.” | 22 | 44 |
| Knowing everything about the child | A25 “He tells me everything.” | 9 | 18 |

According to Table 3, more than half of the mothers participating in the study state that their children can set up and play games on their own and can solve their problems on their own, less than half of the participants state that they make their own decisions, and a very small portion of the participants know such things about their children.

Table 4. Child's Resilience Skills

| Themes | Sample Expressions | N | % |
|--|--|----|----|
| Quickly recovering from the negativities | A11 “When he gets upset, he immediately returns to normal.” | 42 | 84 |
| Not giving up in the face of difficulties | A37 “is very ambitious, he keeps going until he finishes.” | 35 | 70 |
| Being introvert | A20 “He is an emotional, quiet child in the face of events.” | 9 | 18 |

Table 4 suggests that, almost all of the mothers participating in the study state their children quickly recover from the negativities they experience, more than half of the participants claim that their children do not give up in the face of difficulties, and a small portion of the participants' children are seem to be introverted.

Table 5. Child's Well-Being Skills

| Themes | Sample Expressions | N | % |
|---------------------------------|---|----|----|
| Happiness | A49 “He has a happy personality.” | 20 | 40 |
| Enoughness | A17 “He is competent in activities; he can handle it on his own.” | 35 | 70 |
| Caring about others | A15 “You like it when your friends are happy.” | 24 | 48 |
| Good relationship | A31 “His social relations are good.” | 36 | 72 |
| Angriness and grumpiness | A26 “He gets grumpy everywhere he goes.” | 5 | 10 |
| Being introvert | A50 is “quiet, calm and does not like to communicate too much.” | 8 | 16 |
| Being free spirit | A7 “Since he was little, he has been doing whatever he wants, even if he is alone.” | 1 | 2 |

When Table 5 is examined, more than half of the mothers participating in the study claim that their children are competent in activities and social relationships, almost half of the participants care about the happiness of their children's friends, less than half of the participants define their children as happy, a small number of the participants describe their children as introverted, while only one of them describes her child as a free-spirit.

Discussion and Conclusion

Among the results obtained from the findings of the research, it was seen that children who have a secure attachment to their mothers have good body contact and communication with their mothers. In similar research; it is seen that mothers use body language to express themselves better in their communication with their children. Mothers think that they can convey their feelings and thoughts to their children more easily when they support their verbal expressions with body language elements in their communication with their children (Yıldız and Temiz, 2022).

It was seen that ‘playing games’ is described as the most important social activity in preschool, ensuring children's social and cognitive development and preparation for primary education (Koçyiğit and Baydilek, 2015). Among the findings of the research, more than half of the mothers participating in the study state that their children set up and play games on their own. In addition, they state that they can solve their problems on their own, and very few of the participants state that they know everything about their child.

The child learns problem solving skills for the first time through play. Children with secure attachment are associated with interpersonal problem solving, approaching problems positively, being constructive, self-confident, being accepted by their peers, and their social skill levels (Dinçer, 2019).

Among the findings of the research, almost all of the mothers who participated in the research say that they immediately come together in the face of the negativities their children experience. Aktan and Önder (2018) argue that children's psychological resilience strengthens the child, enables him to gain new experiences, cope with difficulties, and resist negative events and failures. More than half of the participants state that their children do not give up in the face of difficulties. Upon examining the supporting research, it becomes evident that children may encounter several issues that they have encountered throughout their life, leading to the development of fear, anxiety, or stress. The situations that children use and how they overcome them vary from each other. While some children try to cope by looking for solutions when they encounter a problem, some children try to cope by ignoring the problem (Kındıroğlu and Ekici, 2019).

Among the findings of the research, more than half of the mothers participating in the study state that their children are competent in activities and social relationships, and almost half of the participants care about the happiness of their children's friendships. In a similar study, it is said that mother-child communication helps solve other people's problems by offering clues, paying attention to their emotions, talking positively with their peers, interacting, and observing positive or negative reactions (Kazan and Sarısoy, 2021).

As a result, when the research findings are examined, a solid attachment occurs when children can provide sufficient contact with the caregiver. The safety and quality of the attachment relationship is affected by the caregiver's reactions to the baby. (Keskin and Çam, 2007). During this period, it is ensured that the child receives sufficient attention from his/her parents, his/her needs are met, and the necessary steps are taken for the child's general mental health and well-being (Yildiz, 2017).

Love, respect, responsibility, happiness, kindness, honesty, etc. are used to positively support children's social and emotional development. In order to gain universally accepted value behaviors, theme-based education programs that will cover all these skills in the preschool period can be prepared and the level of contribution to children's well-being and resilience levels can be measured. These programs can be designed to disseminate programs that support well-being and resilience through the Ministry of Education. By giving training seminars to preschool teachers, the development of their skills in preparing programs for well-being and resilience can be supported. Considering that teachers with high levels of well-being and resilience can support children socially and emotionally, in-service training can be organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and universities in order to increase the well-being and resilience levels of teachers. Psychological resilience programs with family participation can be prepared and their effects can be examined.

Declarations

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