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Investigating Print Awareness Skills of Preschool Children in Terms of Child and Parent Variances *

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Abstract

The research was carried out with the aim of examining the print awareness skills of children attending preschool in terms of various variances. A total of 295 children were selected using the convenience sampling method - 151 of them were male and 144 of them were female. Data were obtained using the "Preschool Word and Print Awareness Assessment Tool". The data obtained from the study were analyzed in the SPSS 20.0 package program. As a result of the study, it was seen that there was no significant relationship between children's print awareness skills and their gender, father's occupation and father's education status, while it was found that there was a significant relationship between their print awareness skills and mother's occupation and education status.

Keywords

Print awareness
Early literacy
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Introduction

Literacy is a multifaceted, multidimensional and sophisticated process that begins at birth and continues throughout life (Brand & Donato, 2001; Decker & Decker, 2016; Erdoğan, 2013; Kamei-Hannan & Ricci, 2015; Morrow, 2007; Whitehead, 2007). Literacy skills have enough power to shape the children's future life besides success of children in the school. (Niklas & Schneider, 2013). For this reason, educators and scientists has been discussing on the topics of how children acquire literacy skills and how they can acquire these skills better.

The experiences in the preschool period have great importance on the child to be a good literate and have a positive attitude towards reading and writing (Black, 2013; Compean-Garcia, 2011; Fields, Groth, & Spangler, 2007; Justice & Sofka, 2010; Piasta, Justice, McGint, & Kaderavek, 2012; Saracho, 2017; Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2007; Whitehead, 2007). Skills that children need to acquire in this period in order to be able to be a good literate in the future are called early literacy skills. Early literacy skills are the process that starts with the child's learning native language, develops gradually, and includes the preliminary knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary to become a good literate (Blake, 2014; Griffith, Beach, Ruan, & Dunn, 2008; Trawick-Smith, 2014; Strickland & Schickedanz, 2009; Üstün, 2007). Early literacy skills include verbal language, print awareness, alphabet knowledge, phonetic awareness and writing attempts (Bayraktar & Temel, 2017; Bekir, 2017; Coe, 2009; Griffith et al., 2008; Jalongo, 2013; Turan, 2017).

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Print awareness skills are one of the early literacy skills that children need to acquire in the pre-school period (Bayraktar & Temel, 2017; Blake, 2014; Clay, 2000; Cabell, Justice, Kaderavek, Trunbull, & Breit-Smith, 2009; Erdoğan, 2013; Justice & Sofka, 2010; Soderman, Gregory, & McCarty, 2005; Wang, 2015; Vacca, Vacca, Gove, Burkey, Lenhart, & McKean, 2012). Print awareness was first expressed by Mary Clay in 1960. Print awareness is the child's ability to recognize symbols and signs (letters, words, punctuation marks, logos, cautions, warning signs, etc.) and to understand that letters constitute words, and words constitute sentences; sentences begin with capital letters; a punctuation mark is put at the end of each sentence; there is a gap between words; and texts are read from left to right and from top to bottom. Print awareness is also the ability to understand which page is read first, how a book is held, how pages are turned over, and what the relationship is between the written language and the spoken language (Bayraktar & Temel, 2017; Blake, 2014; Clay, 2000; Cabell et al., 2009; Erdoğan, 2013; Justice & Sofka, 2010; Soderman et al., 2005; Wang, 2015; Vacca et al., 2012). One of the early literacy skills that children need to acquire in the pre-school period is the print awareness skill (Bayraktar & Temel, 2017; Blake, 2014; Clay, 2000; Cabell et al., 2009; Erdoğan, 2013; Justice & Sofka, 2010; Soderman et al., 2005; Wang, 2015; Vacca et al., 2012). Print awareness was first expressed by Mary Clay in 1960. Print awareness is the child's ability to recognize symbols and signs (letters, words, punctuation marks, logos, cautions, warning signs, etc.) and to understand that letters constitute words, and words constitute sentences; sentences begin with capital letters; a punctuation mark is put at the end of each sentence; there is a gap between words; and texts are read from left to right and from top to bottom. Print awareness is also the ability to understand which page is read first, how a book is held, how pages are turned over, and what the relationship is between the written language and the spoken language (Bayraktar & Temel, 2017; Blake, 2014; Clay, 2000; Cabell et al., 2009; Erdoğan, 2013; Justice & Sofka, 2010; Soderman et al., 2005; Wang, 2015; Vacca et al., 2012).

In the pre-school period, children often are able to notice symbols in their surroundings (Beauchat, Blamey, & Walpole, 2010; Justice, Pence, Beckman, Skibbe, & Wiggins, 2005; Strickland & Schickedanz, 2009; Whitehead, 2007; Wortham, 2009). A child's symbol awareness is a process which begins with the showing interest on pictures (Decker & Decker, 2016; Wang, 2015; Vukelich, Christie, & Enz, 2012). A child's beginning to notice symbols around himself or herself is considered to be important for print awareness (Beauchat et al., 2010; Saracho, 2017; Strickland & Schickedanz, 2009; Whitehead, 2007). Research shows that children can recognize texts, signs, logos and symbols in their environment around the age of three (Trawick-Smith, 2014; Wortham, 2009). Skills in this period should not be considered as real reading skills. But, it is accepted that learnings are prerequisite for the child's learning to read and write. Some children learn some of these skills by themselves, while some children need adult support. Children should not be left alone to acquire by chance print awareness skills that are essential for them to become literate. In order for children to be able to learn print awareness skills in a complete and correct way, they need to be supported by adults in their regular environment, because they can learn better in the regular environment. Adults' task here is to make it easier for children to learn these skills in a rich, stimulating environment (Beauchat et al., 2010; Israel, 2008; Jalongo, 2013; Justice et al., 2005; Morrison, 2015; Trawick-Smith, 2014; Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2002; Üstün, 2007; Vukelich et al., 2012).

Adults encourage children to acquire print awareness skills and become models for them (Both-de Vries & Bus, 2014; Decker & Decker, 2016; Justice et al., 2005). Books and other written and printed materials play an important role in helping children achieve print awareness skills. Certain behaviors support children's print awareness skills, including adults' reading books to children and interacting about knowledge of written language while sharing books (to know how a book is held and how the pages are turned, to distinguish the beginning and end of a book, also to distinguish the beginning, middle and end of a page, and so on.). Such behaviors also include responding to questions about book-related topics children are interested in and wonder about; introducing different written materials (such as books, magazines, comics, newspapers, prescriptions, tickets, invitations, food menus and recipes); preparing a shopping list with children; and taking children to the library or a bookstore (Brand & Donato, 2001; Jackman, 2012; Rog, 2011; Rvachew, Rees, Carolan, & Nading, 2017; Vukelich et al., 2012; Zucker & Grant, 2007). Also in the study conducted by Yıldız, Ataş, Aktaş, Yekeler, and Dönmez (2015), it was found that the 5-year-old children of families with lower socioeconomic levels were in the stage

of random letter formation, while the children of those with middle and upper socioeconomic levels were in the writing phase by associating letters with sounds; that is, their writing perception was better. In summary, the experience of children gained at their homes is important in the development of print awareness skills (Fields et al., 2007; Justice & Sofka, 2010; Pena, 2009; Sim & Berthelsen, 2014). In this process, children's attaining early literacy, developing positive attitudes toward reading, and becoming good literates depend on their ability to view reading as a fun activity in a rich, stimulating environment (Blake, 2014; Sawyer, 2010).

What is aimed in the pre-school education is not to teach reading and writing to children. It is a prerequisite for children to learn to read and write quickly and easily (Beauchat et al., 2010; Ministry of National Education [MONE], 2013; Saracho, 2017; Strickland & Schickedanz, 2009; Whitehead, 2007). Children's literacy experience is directly proportional to language and early literacy skills (Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Speece, Ritchey, Cooper, Roth, & Schatschneider, 2004; Powell, 2012). Research shows that children's print awareness skills develop if such skills are supported in the preschool period (Altınkaynak, 2014). Moreover, it has been determined that support for early literacy skills influences children's future reading achievement (Bayraktar & Temel, 2014; Cabell et al., 2011; Leopola, Poskiparta, Laakkonen, & Niemi, 2005; Piasta et al., 2012; Puranik, Phillips, Lonigan, & Gibson, 2018).

Print awareness skills, which are one of early literacy skills, are the basic skills that children need to acquire in order to be a good literate. It should not be left to chance that children can fully and correctly acquire print awareness skills. It is also necessary for children to be supported by adults in order to be able to acquire print awareness skills. Considering how stimuli, attitudes and behaviors offered by parents to their children affect print awareness skills of children in the family, it is important to determine how much the family contributes to their children's print awareness skills and to resolve identified deficiencies in a timely manner. Moreover, the pre-school education curriculum in Turkey was updated in 2013 and the content of preparation studies for literacy was expanded for the first time to include objectives and indicators about print awareness and reading awareness. Therefore, it is seen that in Turkey, there is a limited number of studies on print awareness. It was aimed to increase the number of research studies aimed at eliminating these identified needs, to determine the effect of families on print awareness skills of children and to reveal deficiencies to be identified. In order to achieve this aim, sub-problems of the study were determined as follows:

1. Is there a significant difference in print awareness skills of preschool children based on gender?

2. Is there a significant difference in print awareness skills of preschool children based on professions of their mothers?

3. Is there a significant difference in print awareness skills of preschool children based on educational status of their mothers?

4. Is there a significant difference in print awareness skills of preschool children based on professions of their fathers?

5. Is there a significant difference in print awareness skills of preschool children based on educational status of their fathers?

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to children aged 48–66 months who continued to a preschool institution in the provincial center of Ankara in 2015–2016 school year and showed normal development. The identification of the print awareness skills of the children in the sample group was limited to the responses received during the administration of the "Preschool Word and Print Awareness Assessment Tool".

Method

This is a survey research. The data of the study were obtained from children attending preschool. The "Preschool Word and Print Awareness Assessment Tool" developed by Clay (1979) and adapted to Turkish by Bayraktar (2013) was used as the data collection tool in the study.

Research Population and Sample

The research population consisted of 10,707 children aged 48–66 months who were attending the public and private kindergartens and preschools in Çankaya district of Ankara province in the 2015–2016 school year. From within the determined population, 371 children were identified in the 95% confidence interval. Out of the 371 children included in the sampling, 295 were admitted into the study, after 76 children as outliers were excluded.

The sample of the study consisted of a total of 295 children, 151 males and 144 females, selected using the convenience sampling method from 16 institutions including 8 preschools in the primary school, 4 public kindergartens and 4 private schools in Çankaya district center. 51.1% of the children admitted to the sample were male, and 48.8% were female. 55% of the children were in preschools, 20% in private kindergartens and 25% in formal kindergartens. Convenience sampling is the sampling method based on data collection from nearby volunteer subjects that are in close proximity and are easy to reach when a region is not in question (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

Data Collection Instrument

Personal Information Form: The form included questions such as child's age and gender, mother's occupation and education status, father's occupation and education status.

Preschool Word and Print Awareness Assessment Tool: The "Preschool Word and Print Awareness Assessment Tool" developed by Clay (1979) and adapted to Turkish by Justice and Ezel (2001) was re-adapted to Turkish, and validity and reliability studies were conducted by Bayraktar (2013). The scale consisted of two sub-dimensions, print concepts (items such as "Show me the front of the book" and "Show me the name of the book") and word recognition (items such as "Show me a word on this page", "Show me the small words written on this page"). There were 14 items in the print awareness sub-dimension and 12 items in the word recognition sub-dimension. The test retest reliability level of the print concepts sub-dimension was 0.93, and its KR20 was 0.74; the test retest reliability level of the word recognition sub-dimension was 0.92, and its KR20 was 0.71. The stories "Nine Ducks Nine" by Hayes and "Spot Bakes A Cake" by Hill were used for the "Print Concepts" and "Word Recognition" sub-tests, respectively. The story books were translated into Turkish by two experts who studied English Language Literature and were examined by three experts of the field. After the necessary corrections were made, these Turkish forms were used as books in the measurement process. In the story book titled "Nine Ducks Nine," the story of the adventure between nine ducks and a fox was told. In the story titled "Spot Bakes a Cake," the story of how Spot bakes a cake with his mother was told. In the implementation of the scale, the child was asked various questions on almost every page of the story as the story was read, and the story continued to be read. The child received 1 point for correct answers and 0 points for incorrect answers. On the 4th, 5th, and 12th items of the Print Concepts sub-test, the child could possibly get 0, 1 or 2 points according to the answers he or she gave. The highest score the child could get from the Print Concepts sub-test was a total of 16 points; the highest score that could be obtained from the Word Recognition sub-test was a total of 12 points.

Data Collection Process

The study was planned on the basis of volunteerism. The study was carried out in the 2015–2016 school year in a total of 16 institutions consisting of 8 preschools, 4 pubic kindergartens and 4 private schools located in Çankaya district of Ankara province. Information on the purpose of the research was given to the teachers and families of the sampled children. The scale was individually administered to the children by the researcher himself. During the application, two story books were used to ask children various questions about print awareness skills, and the answers given by children were scored. It took approximately 10–20 minutes to administer the scale. The data were collected between March 1, 2016 and May 30, 2016. The results of the study were shared as a report with both the teachers and the parents.

Data Analysis

Data were evaluated using the "independent-samples t test," which is a parametric test, when the distributions were normal, and using the "Mann-Whitney U test" and the "Kruskal-Wallis H test," which are nonparametric tests, when the distributions were not normal. In the Kruskal-Wallis H test, when there was a significant difference between the groups, the Mann-Whitney U Test was used to investigate which group or groups differed.

Results

Independent samples t test, Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis H test were used to evaluate the results of the test that was implemented to determine whether print awareness skills acquired by the children differed according to the variables including gender, mother's occupation and education status, and father's occupation and education status.

Table 1. The t Test Result for the Children's Print Concepts Sub-dimension by Gender

Test	Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	Std. Deviation	sd	t	p
Print Concepts	Male	151	8.8146	3,68131	292	-,881	,379
	Female	143	9.1818	3,45726			

When Table 1 was examined, it was seen that the mean scores that the children obtained from the print concepts sub-dimension (t = -.881, p=.379>05) did not show any significant difference according to the gender of the children.

Table 2. The Mann-Whitney U Test Result for the Children's Word Recognition Sub-dimension by Gender

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Total Rank	U	p
Word Recognition	Male	151	142,91	21579,50	10103,500	,338
	Female	143	152,35	21785,50		

When Table 2 was examined, it was seen that the mean scores-related mean ranks that the children obtained from the word recognition sub-dimension (t=10103.500, p=.338>05) did not show any significant difference according to the gender of the children. The results of both Table 1 and Table 2 show that the children's gender was not a significant variable in the print awareness skills in the pre-school period.

Table 3. The Kruskal-Wallis H Results based on Occupation of Children's Mothers

	Mother's Occupation	N	Mean Rank	H (sd=3)	P	Mann-Whitney U Test
Print Concepts	housewife	131	105,11	17,684	,001*	3>1, 4>1, 5>1, 2<1 3>2, 4>2, 5>2, 1>2
	worker	14	85,75			
	retailer	18	161,53			
	public servant	19	139,66			
	professional occupation	44	116,35			
Word Recognition	housewife	131	101,43	17,992	,001*	4>1, 5>1, 3>1, 2<1
	worker	14	90,00			
	retailer	18	130,22			
	public servant	19	147,82			
	professional occupation	44	135,26			

*p<.05 Criteria: Housewife=1, worker=2, retailer=3, public servant=4, professional occupation=5

When Table 3 was examined, it was seen that there was a significant difference between the mean scores-related mean ranks of the print concepts sub-dimension based on mother's occupation according to H=17.684, p=.001<.05. This significant difference was due to the fact that the print awareness-related mean ranks of retailer mothers (161.53), public servant mothers (139.66) and mothers with professional occupation (116.35) were greater than that of housewife mothers (105.11). It was also due to the fact that the print awareness-related mean rank of housewife mothers (105.11) was greater than that of worker mothers (85.75).

It was seen that there was a significant difference between the mean scores-related mean ranks of the word recognition sub-dimension based on mother's occupation according to H=17.792, p=.000<.05. This significant difference was due to the fact that the print awareness-related mean rank of public servant mothers (147.82), the word recognition-related mean ranks of retailer mothers (130.22) and mothers with professional occupation (135.26) were greater than the word recognition -related mean rank of housewife mothers (101.43). It was also due to the fact that the word recognition -related mean rank of housewife mothers (101.43) was greater than that of worker mothers (90.00). These findings show that the occupation status of children's mothers was a significant variable in the pre-school print awareness skills.

Table 4. The Kruskal-Wallis H Results based on Education Status of Children's Mothers

	Mother's Education Status	**N**	**Mean Rank**	**H (sd=3)**	**P**	**Mann-Whitney U Test**
Print Concepts	primary school	80	98,64	18,161	,000*	4>1, 3>1, 2>1
	middle school	62	120,58			
	high school	92	140,44			
	university or higher	68	141,46			
Word Recognition	primary school	80	104,04	16,966	,001*	4>1, 3>1, 2>1
	middle school	12	92,63			
	high school	92	135,70			
	university or higher	68	146,46			

*p<.05 Criteria: Primary school=1, middle school=2, high school= 3, university or higher=4

When Table 4 was examined, it was seen that there was a significant difference between the mean scores-related mean ranks of the print concepts sub-dimension based on mother's education status according to H=18.161, p=.000<.05. This significant difference was due to the fact that the print awareness-related mean ranks of mothers graduating from university or higher (141.46), mothers graduating from high school (140.44) and mothers graduating from middle school (120.58) was greater than that of mothers graduating from primary school (98.64).

It was seen that there was a significant difference between the mean scores-related mean ranks of the word recognition sub-dimension based on mother's education status according to H=16.966, p=.001<.05. This significant difference was due to the fact that the word recognition-related mean ranks of mothers graduating from university or higher (146.46) and mothers graduating from high school (135.70) were greater than that of mothers graduating from primary school (104.04). It was also due to the fact that the word recognition-related mean rank of mothers graduating from middle school (92.63) was smaller than that of mothers graduating from primary school (98.64). These findings show that the education status of children's mothers was a significant variable in the pre-school print awareness skills.

Table 5. The Kruskal-Wallis H Results based on Occupation of Children's Fathers

	Father's Education Status	N	Mean Rank	H (sd=3)	P
Print Concepts	worker	90	116,06	2,244	,523
	retailer	57	128,48		
	public servant	42	131,74		
	professional occupation	60	130,38		
Word Recognition	worker	90	115,63	5,412	,144
	retailer	57	117,17		
	public servant	42	137,74		
	professional occupation	60	137,58		

*p<.05 Criteria: Worker=1, Retailer=2, Public Servant=3, and Professional Occupation=4

When Table 5 was examined, it was seen that there was no significant difference between the mean scores-related mean ranks of the print awareness based on father's occupation status according to H=2.244, p=.523<.05. It was seen that there was no significant difference between the mean scores-related mean ranks of the word recognition sub-dimension based on father's occupation status according to H=5.412, p=.144<.05. These findings show that the occupation status of children's fathers was not a significant variable in the pre-school print awareness skills.

Table 6. The Kruskal-Wallis H Results based on Education Status of Children's Fathers

	Father's Education Status	N	Mean Rank	H (sd=3)	P	Mann-Whitney U Test
Print Concepts	primary school	43	98,92	11,210	,011	4>1
	middle school	25	100,48			
	high school	99	132,17			
	university or higher	80	134,73			
Word Recognition	primary school	43	95,94	10,344	,016	4>1
	middle school	25	111,76			
	high school	99	129,64			
	university or higher	80	135,93			

*p<.05 Criteria: Primary school=1, middle school=2, high school= 3, university or higher=4

When Table 6 was examined, it was seen that there was a significant difference between the mean scores-related mean ranks of the print concepts sub-dimension based on father's education status according to H=11.210, p=.011<.05. This significant difference was due to the fact that the print awareness-related mean ranks of fathers graduating from university and higher (134.73) was greater than that of fathers graduating from primary school (98.92).

It was seen that there was a significant difference between the mean scores-related mean ranks of the word recognition sub-dimension based on father's education status according to H=10.344, p=.016<.05'e. This significant difference was due to the fact that the print awareness-related mean ranks of fathers graduating from university and higher (135,93) was greater than that of fathers graduating from primary school (95,94). These findings show that the education status of children's fathers was a significant variable in the pre-school print awareness skills.

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

In this study, the print awareness skills of 48 months and 66 months old children attending preschool were examined and compared in terms of different variables. According to the findings obtained from the study, while there was a statistically significant difference in the children's print awareness skills based on the variables of mother's occupation and education status, there was no statistically significant difference according to the variables of children's gender, father's occupation and education status.

The experiences a child gains in the preschool period have great importance for the child to become a good literate and form a positive attitude towards reading and writing (Black, 2013; Compean-Garcia, 2011; Justice & Sofka, 2010; Piasta et al., 2012; Saracho, 2017). What is aimed in pre-school education is not to teach children reading and writing. The aim is to support early literacy skills so that children can learn to read easily. One of the early literacy skills is the print awareness skills (Griffith et al., 2008; Justice et al., 2005; Machado, 2003; Soderman et al., 2005). According to Machado (2003), children's acquiring print awareness skills is the basis for reading. These skills evolve progressively until the actual reading takes place. In print awareness, the first stage is the child's understanding of the writing symbols. Research shows that children can recognize texts around them (writings on packaging of food that they like, the texts and logos of cartoons on television, etc.) beginning from the age of three (Justice et al., 2005; Wortham, 2009).

Adults encourage children to acquire print awareness skills and become models for them (Both-de Vries & Bus, 2014; Decker & Decker, 2016). In a study by Byrne et al. (2006), it has been found that the child's interaction with his surroundings is important in the development of the print awareness skill. Children's print awareness skills begin to develop before they start kindergarten, and they learn better in natural settings, revealing the importance of parents. Kuby and Aldridge have found in their studies conducted in different years (1991, 2006) that children's print awareness skills can be improved better through play in the natural settings. The task of the adult here is to provide opportunities for children to learn these skills in a rich, stimulating environment (Jalongo, 2013; Justice et al., 2005; Morrison, 2015; Trawick-Smith, 2014; Üstün, 2007; Vukelich et al., 2012). It is seen in studies that these skills are improved in children who are supported for their print awareness skills in the preschool period (Altınkaynak & Akman, 2016; Bayraktar, 2013; Compton-Lilly, 2012; Goodrich, Lonigan, & Farver, 2017; Ihmeideh, 2014; Mckenzie, 2015; Neumann, 2014; Padlick-Field, 2011; Puranik et al., 2018; Rvachew et al., 2017; Wesseling, Christmann, & Lancmann, 2017). The results of these earlier studies can be said to support the results obtained in this study.

According to the findings of the study, the print awareness skills the children acquired did not differ according to the gender of the children. Research findings of Harper and Pelletier (2008), Gürocak (2007), Karaman (2006), Kelman (2007), Renee Harell (2003), Matthews, Ponitz, and Morrison (2009), Tafa (2009) and Yıldırım (2008) also show that early literacy skills of children do not differ according to the gender of children. The research findings are consistent with the findings of this study, which showed that the print awareness skills of the children did not differ according to the gender of the children. Unlike these studies, there are also studies showing that girls are more successful than boys in print awareness skills according to the gender variable. Research conducted by Karaman (2013), Lee and Otaiba (2015), Lundberg, Larsman, and Strid (2012), Marjanovic-Umek and Fekonaja-Peklaj (2017); Moss and Washbrook (2016); Niklas and Schneider (2013), Sigmundsson, Eriksen, Ofteland, and Haga (2017) found significant differences between the variables of early literacy skills and gender of children, in favor of girls. For early literacy skills, children need adult support (Jalongo, 2013; Justice et al., 2005; Morrison, 2015; Trawick-Smith, 2014; Üstün, 2007; Vukelich et al., 2012). What is important here is the interference that parents apply. These interventions constitute the communication that parents establish with their children — that is, how much they talk to their children — and the stimuli they offer to them. Dodici, Draper, and Petersom (2003), Gustafsson, Hansen, and Rosen (2011), Huttenlocher, Height, Bryk, Seltzer, and Lyons (1991), Karacan (2000) found that these types of activities were found to be carried out more commonly with girls than with boys. This is thought to lead girls to develop language

skills and early literacy skills earlier than boys. In the study of Johnson (2008); Leslie (2012); Prendiville and Toye (2007) and Warrington et al., (2006), it was found that boys' language skills developed when they were supported through activities (drama, role playing, improvisation, etc.). In another study by Byrne et al. (2006), it was found that the environment was more effective in the development of print awareness skills than genetic factors. The findings of this study together with the research findings mentioned above, show us that the gender variable is not important in the development of children's print awareness skills; what is important is how well the child's early literacy skills are supported.

There was a significant difference in the sub-dimensions of both the print concepts and the word recognition according to the mother's occupation. This difference was in favor of the retailer mothers, mothers with professional occupation and mothers who were public servants. The mothers who were retailers, who had professional occupations and who were public servants were considered to have higher socioeconomic levels than the mothers who were workers and housewives, and were thought to offer richer stimuli to their children. Parents' education levels and occupations are considered as criteria for the socio-economic level (Alexsander, 2016; Berk & Meyers, 2015, Kalaycıoğlu, Çelik, Çelen, & Türkyılmaz, 2010). Research conducted by Arnold and Doctoroff (2003), Ayaz (2015), Hartas (2011), Husain, Choo, and Singh (2011), Mckenzie (2015) and Slavan (2011) found that as families' socioeconomic status increased, they read more books to their children, communicated more verbally, encouraged children in other ways, and provided children with more freedom and stimuli to explore the environment; it was also seen that the success of such children rose in a direct proportion. It has been determined that children of families with low socioeconomic status have low literacy and language experiences, which causes such children to have low early literacy skills (Foster & Miller, 2007; Wang, 2015). Gürocak (2007) and Karaman (2006) also found significant differences between the variables of children's achievement and their mother's occupation. It can be said that research supports the finding of this study that children differ in terms of their print awareness skills based on their mother's occupation.

Another finding of the study was that there was a significant difference in the sub-dimensions of both the print concepts and the word recognition according to the mother's education status. This difference favored the mothers who graduated from university or higher, high school, and middle school. As the learning level of the mothers increased, their children's scores also increased in direct proportion. This is thought to be due to the nature of the mothers' attitude towards reading and writing and the time they spent with their children. That is to say, it is thought that as the education level of the mothers increased, they supported and encouraged their children more in ways such as communicating more with their children, reading those books more frequently, giving them the opportunity to express themselves or providing more stimulating materials. It is also stated in the literature that children's attitudes and achievements towards literacy are related to how their families approach to reading and writing and to the materials they present to their children (Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Powell, 2012; Schick, 2014; Speece et al., 2004). Research by Ersoy and Bayraktar (2015); Beyazova (2006); Hartas (2011) and Saban and Altınkamış (2014) has also shown that as the education level of mothers increases, the frequency of reading books to their children increases. There are many studies that have found that reading books to children supports children's print awareness skills (Altınkaynak, 2014; Bayraktar, 2013; Bayraktar & Temel, 2014; Horner, 2004; Lovelace & Steward, 2007; Lefebvre, Trudeau, & Sutton, 2011; McGinity, Smith, Xitao, Justice, & Kaderavek, 2011; Swain, Brooks, & Bosley, 2014; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006).When the research on how education status of mothers affects children's early literacy skills was investigated, it was found that education status of mothers supports children's print awareness skills positively (Altıparmak, 2010; Curenton & Justice, 2008; Gürocak, 2007; Karaman, 2013; Kelman, 2007; Lynch, Anderson, Anderson, & Shapiro, 2007, 2008; PISA, 2009; Taylor, Greenberg, & Teryy, 2016; Yıldırım, 2008). Research shows consistency with the finding of this study, which revealed that the print awareness skills acquired by the children differed based on the mother's education status — there was a difference in favor of the mothers graduating from university or higher compared to the mothers graduating from primary school, middle school and high school.

Considering the finding of the study related to the father variable, there was no significant difference in the children's print concepts and word recognition sub-dimensions in terms of occupations of their fathers. This is thought to be related to the role of fathers in the society. In the literature, it is stated that fathers who have a traditional father role spend less time with their children and undertake less child care (Çatıkkaş, 2008; Feldman, Nash, & Aschenbrenner, 1983). It is stated in the literature that the nature and content of the the time fathers spend with their children are much more important than the span of the time (Department for Children, Schools and Families [DCSF], 2008). Moreover, studies by Ersoy and Bayraktar (2015) and Ayaz (2015) have shown that fathers read books to children at a lower rate than their mothers. Those studies appear to support the research finding of this study, which showed that there was no significant difference between the print awareness skills of children and the father's occupation.

Considering another finding of the study related to the father variable, there was a significant difference in the children's print concepts and word recognition sub-dimensions in terms of educational status of their fathers. This differentiation favored the fathers who graduated from a university and higher institution. As the learning level of the fathers increased, their children's scores also increased in direct proportion. This is thought to be related to the fathers' points of views about reading and writing and to their spending quality time together with their children. It was also seen in studies done by Altıparmak (2010), Gürocak (2007) and Karaman (2006) that there was a significant difference in print awareness skills in terms of the father's educational status variable. This appears to support the research finding that there was a significant difference between the print awareness skills of children in terms of their father's educational status.

In conclusion, it was seen that while there was no significant difference in print awareness skills of children in terms of gender and father's occupation variables, there was a significant difference in terms of the variables of mother's occupation, mother's educational level and father's educational level. According to the findings obtained from the study, it can be said that the variables of mother's educational level, mother's occupation and father's educational level are influential on children's print awareness skills.

Suggestions

Investigations can be done to determine the reasons for the difference between the children's print awareness skills based on the mother's education status. Based on the needs of families, teachers can organize family education activities on awareness about and the importance of early literacy skills, and how the families can support their children in their regular environment. Teachers can encourage families with low socioeconomic status to have their children benefit from environments such as libraries, which are rich in terms of quality books and where children are served by expert staff. Family education events can be organized in Public Education Centers to raise awareness of and develop knowledge, skills and attitudes of families with low socioeconomic status pertaining to early literacy. Research can be conducted to determine the reasons why the father's education status and occupation did not have any effect on the child's print awareness skills. Family education activities can be organized in Public Education Centers to raise awareness of families about the importance of father's participation in his child's education. Moreover, universities, Ministry of National Education and non-governmental organizations can develop projects, with a multidisciplinary approach, for fathers' participation in the education of their children.

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