

The Peer Relations of 5-6 Year Old Children in Relation to Age and Gender

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Suggested Citation:

Gulay, H. (2011). The peer relations of 5-6 year old children in relation to age and gender. *Egitim Arastirmalari-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 43, 107-124.

Abstract

Problem Statement: The preschool period is when the foundations of peer relations are laid and, for this reason, is an important period in terms of the short and long term effects of peer relations. Successful and independent relations built with peers during this period also determine a child's mental health in future years. When children experience problems and failures in peer relations during this period, they bear the risk of developing behavioral and social incompatibilities in the future. Thus, their risk of experiencing mental retardation and behavioral problems increases.

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this research is to study the peer relations of 5-6 year old children in relation to age and gender.

Methods: The sample group of the present study consisted of 450 children, aged 5-6, who were attending preschools located in Denizli, Turkey. A form of demographic data, the Ladd and Profilet Child Behavior Scale, and the Victimization Scale were used as data gathering tools in the study. These tools were used by the teachers. A two-way variance analysis (ANOVA) technique was used in this study.

Findings and Results: The results indicated that statistically significant differences were found in the asocial behavior of children, the act of being excluded from the group and hyperactivity related to age. Some significant differences were also found in terms of aggression, prosocial behavior, hyperactivity and peer victimization in relation to the gender of children.

Conclusion and Recommendations: In general terms, age or gender is observed to affect all peer relation variables except social position. Results obtained in relation to age are striking, as they indicate that a one-year age

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difference may be crucial to behavior and peer relations in developmental terms during the preschool period. It was determined that gender is also an important variable that may affect peer relations among young children.

Keywords: Peer relations, age, gender, preschool period.

Some important developmental competencies for a preschool-period child include developing positive relationships with peers, guiding one's feelings during interactions, and having some social expectations from individuals apart from one's parents (Denham, 2007). The preschool period is the time when the foundations of peer relations are laid and, for this reason, is an important period in terms of the short and long term effects of peer relations. Successful and independent relations built with peers during this period determine a child's mental health in future years. In addition, long-term peer rejection during the preschool period may lead to negative results, which will hinder behavioral success in future years (Walker, 2004). When children experience problems and failures in peer relations during this period, they bear the risk of developing behavioral and social incompatibilities in the future. Thus, their risk of experiencing mental retardation and behavioral problems increases. In line with the aforementioned observations, it has been determined that positive peer relations support a child's development and that the problems found in peer interactions are the determinant factors in social competence problems experienced in future years (Brown, Odom, & Conray, 2001).

There are several factors affecting peer relations during the preschool period: individual differences, family-related variables (the direct and indirect effect of parents, siblings, etc.), culture, play, and preschool education institutions are among the primary factors (Gülay, 2009b). Among individual differences, gender is a variable affecting peer relations in the early years of life. The effect of one's gender on peer relations is particularly observed in aggressive behavior. There are differences between girls and boys in terms of the frequency and type of aggressive behavior. It has been reported in various studies that boys exhibit aggression more often as compared to girls and resort mostly to physical aggression (Bierman, 2005; Kostelnik, Whiren, Soderman, & Gregory, 2005; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Lagerspetz, 2000). Age difference is another factor affecting peer relations. It has been observed that as children grow older, their behavioral problems decrease and social skills improve (Rubin, 1993). The increase in experience and maturation in relation to age may result in successful peer relations in children.

In Turkey, there are available studies and scales on peer relations for primary school, secondary school and higher education periods (Akgün, 2005; Bilgiç & Yurtal, 2008; Can & Akdoğan, 2007; Çakır & Yazıcıoğlu, 2007; Dölek, 2002; Ertokuş-Delikara, 2000; Gültekin, 2003; Önder & Gülay, 2005; Önder & Gülay, 2008; Pekel, 2004; Topçu & Erdur-Baker, 2007), and there has been an increase in recent years in the number of scales prepared and studies conducted to study the peer relations of preschool period children (Anlak & Dinçer, 2005; Çorbacı-Oruç, 2008; Egercioğlu, 2008; Gülay 2008; Gülay, 2009a; Kargı, 2009). However, these scales and research are not sufficient to provide comprehensive data. Thus, the aim of this study is to examine the effect of

age and gender on peer relations in 5-6 year old children receiving preschool education. To this end, answers were sought for the following questions:

Does the aggressive behavior of 5-6 year old children in their peer group differ according to age and gender? Does the prosocial behavior of 5-6 year old children in their peer group differ according to age and gender? Does the asocial behavior of 5-6 year old children in their peer group differ according to age and gender? Do the excluded levels of 5-6 year old children in their peer group differ according to age and gender? Do the hyperactivity levels of 5-6 year old children in their peer group differ according to age and gender? Does the level of peer victimization in 5-6 year old children differ according to age and gender?

Method

Research Design

In the research, a relational screening model was used to examine the peer relations of 5-6 year old children in relation to age and gender. The relational screening model was located within the general screening model. This model determined the degree of presence and relational degree between dependent and/or independent variables (Karasar, 1998).

Population and Sample

The population of the research consisted of 5-6 year old children receiving preschool education at public primary schools in Denizli affiliated with the Ministry of National Education. The sample group was selected by using a random sampling method. The sample group consisted of 450 5-6 year old children (216 girls, 234 boys) receiving preschool education at ten primary schools in Denizli affiliated with the Ministry of National Education. The sample group included 216 girls (48.0%) and 234 boys (52.0%). The average age of the children was 5 years, 4 months, 6 days (minimum 5 years, 28 days; maximum 6 years 1 month 21 days).

Research Instruments

Demographic Data Form. This was developed by the researcher. The form included questions about the child's demographic characteristics (including gender, date of birth, school name, education level of parents, mother's age, father's age, mother's occupation, father's occupation, number of brothers and sisters, gender of brothers and sisters). There were eleven questions in this form.

Ladd and Profilet Child Behavior Scale. This is a measurement tool developed by Gary W. Ladd and Suzan M. Profilet in 1996 to evaluate the peer relations of preschool children, according to information provided by teachers. The scale consists of 6 sub-scales and a total of 44 items. The sub-scales are as follows: Exhibiting aggression towards peers, exhibiting prosocial behaviors towards peers, exhibiting asocial behaviors towards peers, feeling fear and anxiety towards peers, exclusion by peers, hyperactivity (Ladd & Profilet, 1996).

The items of the scale are evaluated in accordance with the expressions "Never", "Sometimes", "Always". In the studies carried out to adapt the scale into Turkish,

the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined to be .81 at the end of the reliability and validity studies conducted after the linguistic equivalence study. The internal consistency coefficient was .87 of the subscale “exhibiting aggression towards peers”, .88 of the subscale “exhibiting prosocial behaviors towards peers”, was .84 of the subscale “exhibiting asocial behaviors towards peers”, was .78 of the subscale “feeling fear and anxiety towards peers”, was 0.89 of the subscale “excluded by peers”, and was 0.83 of the subscale “hyperactivity” (Gülay, 2008).

Victimization Scale. This is a measurement tool developed in 2002 on the basis of the Self Reports of Victimization Scale developed for 5-6 year old children. This scale was completed by the children’s teachers. The scale included a total of four items, each of which focused on one of the four types of peer aggression (physical, indirect, direct and general). Each item was evaluated with expressions “Never”, “Sometimes” and “Always” (Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2002). Linguistic equivalence, reliability and validity studies of the scale were carried out by author in 2008. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined to be .72 (Gülay, 2008).

Procedure

The Demographic Data Form, Ladd and Profilet Child Behavior Scale and Victimization Scale were filled out by the teachers. The teachers filled out these forms according to their general observations of the children after approximately nine months. Before the application, the teachers were informed by the researcher about the scales and the objective of the research.

Data Analyses

Statistical analyses were performed by using the SPSS 13.0 statistical package program. A two-way variance analysis (ANOVA) technique was used to determine the effect of age and gender on peer relations in 5-6 year old children. Demographic information obtained from the sample group was analyzed by using frequency and percentage distribution.

Findings and Results

Table 1 reveals that the highest average value was obtained from the group of 5-year-old boys ($\bar{\chi} = 2,3667$, $S = 3,0207$), and also from the group of 6-year-old boys ($\bar{\chi} = 2,3158$, $S = 2,7757$). As demonstrated in Table 2, no statistically significant difference was observed between the aggression levels of children in terms of age [$F(1,450) = ,931$; $p > .05$]. The average aggression points of boys and girls presented in Table 3 are $\bar{\chi} = 2,3419$ and $\bar{\chi} = 1,1713$, respectively. A statistically significant difference was found between the aggression point averages of the two groups [$F(1,450) = 25,269$; $p < .001$]. As established by the average points, the aggression levels of boys are higher than those of girls. This finding indicates that gender has a significant effect on aggression. The joint effect of age and gender on aggression was not observed to be significant.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistical Results of the Aggression Levels of 5-6 Year Old Children in Relation to Age and Gender

Age	Gender	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
5 years	Girl	108	1,3704	2,2028
	Boy	120	2,3667	3,0207
	Total	228	1,8947	2,7054
6 years	Girl	108	,9722	1,4880
	Boy	114	2,3158	2,7757
	Total	222	1,6622	2,3376
Total	Girl	216	1,1713	1,8859
	Boy	234	2,3419	2,8979
	Total	450	1,7800	2,5305

Table 2

Two-Way Variance Analysis (ANOVA) Results Showing the Aggression Levels of 5-6 Year Old Children in Relation to Age and Gender

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(p)
Age	5,660	1	5,660	,931	,335
Gender	153,688	1	153,688	25,269	,000
A*G	3,385	1	3,385	,557	,456
Error	2712,600	446	6,082		
Total	4301,000	450			

Table 3

Descriptive Statistical Results of Children 5-6 Years Old Regarding the Levels Prosocial Behavior in Relation to Age and Gender

Age	Gender	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
5 years	Girl	108	13,7685	4,3505
	Boy	120	13,0083	4,5550
	Total	228	13,3684	4,4658
6 years	Girl	108	14,5370	4,2612
	Boy	114	13,5702	4,3517
	Total	222	14,0405	4,3254
Total	Girl	216	14,1528	4,3133
	Boy	234	13,2821	4,4565
	Total	450	13,7000	4,4050

Table 4

Two-Way Variance Analysis (ANOVA) Results Showing the Prosocial Behavior Levels of 5-6 Year Old Children in Relation to Age and Gender

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(p)
Age	49,682	1	49,682	2,583	,109
Gender	83,728	1	83,728	4,354	,037
A*G	1,199	1	1,199	,062	,803
Error	8576,995	446	19,231		
Total	93173,000	450			

An evaluation of Table 3 reveals that the highest average value of prosocial behavior level was obtained from the group of 5-year-old girls ($\bar{\chi}$ = 13,7685, S = 4,3505), and also from the group of 6-year-old girls ($\bar{\chi}$ = 14,5370, S = 4,2612). As Table 4 demonstrates, no statistically significant difference was observed between the prosocial behavior levels of children in terms of age [F (1,450) = 2,583; p > .05]. In terms of gender, as shown in Table 5, the average prosocial behavior points of girls and boys are $\bar{\chi}$ = 14,1528 and $\bar{\chi}$ = 13,2821, respectively. A statistically significant difference was found between the prosocial behavior point averages of the two groups [F (1,450) = 4,354; p < .05]. According to the difference between the aforementioned averages, the prosocial behavior levels of girls are higher than those of boys. This finding indicates that gender has a significant effect on prosocial behavior. The joint effect of age and gender on positive social behavior was not observed to be significant.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistical Results of 5-6 Year Old Children Regarding the Levels of Asocial Behavior in Relation to Age and Gender

Age	Gender	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
5 years	Girl	108	2,0463	2,8593
	Boy	120	2,4250	3,5872
	Total	228	2,2456	3,2612
6 years	Girl	108	1,8611	2,7800
	Boy	114	1,3947	2,2680
	Total	222	1,6216	2,5350
Total	Girl	216	1,9537	2,8149
	Boy	234	1,9231	3,0550
	Total	450	1,9378	2,9390

Table 6

Two-Way Variance Analysis (ANOVA) Results Showing the Asocial Behavior Levels of 5-6 Year Old Children in Relation to Age and Gender

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(p)
Age	41,470	1	1676,093	4,849	,028
Gender	,216	1	41,470	,025	,874
A*G	20,047	1	,216	2,344	,126
Error	3814,247	446	20,047		
Total	5568,000	450			

Table 5 shows that the highest average value was obtained from the group of 5-year-old boys ($\bar{\chi} = 2,4250$, $S = 3,5872$), and from the group of 6-year-old girls ($\bar{\chi} = 1,8611$, $S = 2,7800$). As Table 6 demonstrates, a statistically significant difference was observed between the asocial behavior point averages of 5 and 6 year old children [$F(1,450) = 4,849$; $p < .05$]. It can be seen in Table 6 that the average asocial behavior point of 5-year-olds and 6-year-olds are $\bar{\chi} = 2,2456$ and $\bar{\chi} = 1,6216$, respectively. Accordingly, the asocial behavior levels of children 5 years old are higher than those of children 6 years old. This finding indicates that age has a significant effect on asocial behavior. No statistically significant difference was found in children's asocial behavior in terms of gender [$F(1,450) = ,025$; $p > .05$]. The joint effect of age and gender on asocial behavior was not observed to be significant.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistical Results of 5-6 Year Old Children Regarding Their Excluded Levels in Relation to Age and Gender

Age	Gender	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
5 years	Girl	108	1,3426	2,4804
	Boy	120	2,0333	3,2718
	Total	228	1,7061	2,9379
6 years	Girl	108	,8981	2,0459
	Boy	114	1,0526	2,1363
	Total	222	,9775	2,0895
Total	Girl	216	1,1204	2,2792
	Boy	234	1,5556	2,8146
	Total	450	1,3467	2,5779

Table 8

Two-Way Variance Analysis (ANOVA) Results Showing the Excluded Levels of 5-6 Year Old Children in Relation to Age and Gender

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(p)
Age	57,014	1	57,014	8,781	,003
Gender	20,054	1	20,054	3,089	,080
A*G	8,072	1	8,072	1,243	,265
Error	2895,755	446	6,493		
Total	3800,000	450			

Table 7 demonstrates that the highest average value was obtained from the group of 5-year-old boys ($\bar{\chi} = 2,0333$, $S = 3,2718$), and also from the group of 6-year-old boys ($\bar{\chi} = 1,0526$, $S = 2,1363$). As demonstrated in Tables 7 and 8, at the end of the two-way variance analysis (ANOVA) performed to determine the children's excluded levels in relation to age and gender, the excluded point averages of 5- and 6-year-old children are $\bar{\chi} = 1,7061$ and $\bar{\chi} = ,9775$, respectively. A statistically significant difference was found to exist between the excluded levels of the two groups [$F(1,450) = 8,781$; $p < .001$]. The average points of the excluded levels reveal that the exclusion level of 5-year-old children is higher than that of 6-year-old children. This finding indicates that age has a significant effect on excluded levels. No statistically significant difference was found between the excluded levels of children in terms of gender [$F(1,450) = 3,089$; $p > .05$]. The joint effect of age and gender on excluded levels was not observed to be significant.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistical Results of 5-6 Year Old Children Regarding Their Hyperactivity Levels in Relation to Age and Gender

Age	Gender	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
5 years	Girl	108	1,8796	2,2202
	Boy	120	2,7000	2,2626
	Total	228	2,3114	2,2750
6 years	Girl	108	1,0278	1,6489
	Boy	114	2,4825	2,4066
	Total	222	1,7748	2,1929
Total	Girl	216	1,4537	1,9971
	Boy	234	2,5940	2,3314
	Total	450	2,0467	2,2485

Table 10

Two-Way Variance Analysis (ANOVA) Results Showing the Hyperactivity Levels of 5-6 Year Old Children in Relation to Age and Gender

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(p)
Age	32,102	1	32,102	6,877	,009
Gender	145,292	1	145,292	31,124	,000
A*G	11,294	1	11,294	2,419	,121
Error	2082,017	446	4,668		
Total	4155,000	450			

Table 9 demonstrates that the highest average value was obtained from the group of 5-year-old boys ($\bar{\chi} = 2,7000$, $S = 2,2626$), and also from the group of 6-year-old boys ($\bar{\chi} = 2,4825$, $S = 2,4066$). As demonstrated in Tables 9 and 10, at the end of the two-way variance analysis (ANOVA) performed to determine the children's hyperactivity levels in relation to age and gender, a statistically significant difference was found between the hyperactivity point averages of 5- and 6-year-old children [$F(1,450) = 6,877$; $p < .001$]. The hyperactivity point averages of 5-year-old children and 6-year-old children are $\bar{\chi} = 2,3114$ and $\bar{\chi} = 1,7748$, respectively. Accordingly, the hyperactivity levels of 5-year-old children are higher than those of 6-year-old children. This finding indicates that age has a significant effect on hyperactivity levels. In terms of gender, a statistically significant difference was found between the hyperactivity levels of girls and boys [$F(1,450) = 31,124$; $p < .001$]. The hyperactivity point averages of girls and boys are $\bar{\chi} = 1,4537$ and $\bar{\chi} = 2,5940$, respectively. Accordingly, boys are more hyperactive compared to girls. This finding indicates that gender has a significant effect on hyperactivity. It was also observed that the joint effect of age and gender on hyperactivity is not significant.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistical Results of 5-6 Year Old Children Regarding Their Peer Victimization Levels in Relation to Age and Gender

Age	Gender	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
5 years	Girl	108	,2037	,6803
	Boy	120	,4667	1,0120
	Total	228	,3421	,8788
6 years	Girl	108	,1852	,6287
	Boy	114	,3772	1,1319
	Total	222	,2838	,9251
Total	Girl	216	,1944	,6536
	Boy	234	,4231	1,0707
	Total	450	,3133	,9014

Table 12

Two-Way Variance Analysis (ANOVA) Results Showing the Peer Victimization Levels of 5-6 Year Old Children in Relation to Age and Gender

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(p)
Age	,327	1	,327	,407	,524
Gender	5,811	1	5,811	7,230	,007
A*G	,141	1	,141	,176	,675
Error	358,462	446	,804		
Total	409,000	450			

Table 11 demonstrates that the highest average value was obtained from the group of 5-year-old boys ($\bar{\chi} = ,4667$, $S = 1,0120$), and also from the group of 6-year-old boys ($\bar{\chi} = ,3772$, $S = 1,1319$). As shown in Table 12, no statistically significant difference was found between the peer victimization levels of children in terms of age [$F(1,450) = ,407$; $p > .05$]. On the other hand, a statistically significant difference was observed between the peer victimization point averages of girls and boys in terms of gender [$F(1,450) = 7.230$; $p < .001$]. The peer victimization point averages of girls and boys are $\bar{\chi} = ,1944$ and $\bar{\chi} = ,4231$, respectively. As seen in the average points, the level of peer victimization among boys is higher compared to girls. This finding indicates that gender has a significant effect on peer victimization. It was also observed that the joint effect of age and gender on peer victimization is not significant.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A statistically significant difference was found between the aggression levels of children with relation to gender. Accordingly, it may be concluded that boys are more aggressive than girls. The obtained results show similarities with the results of some previous studies. For example, according to the results of research conducted by Walker (2004) to investigate the relationship between the gender, social position and social behavior of Australian preschool children, boys used aggressive and harmful strategies more frequently than girls while solving conflicts in a peer group (Walker, 2004). In another study, which included 111 children (48 boys, 63 girls) between the ages of 3 and 5 (Walker, 2005), the relationship between social competence and gender variable was examined. According to the obtained results, girls act in an aggressive and harmful way more frequently than boys, and they exhibit social behavior for helping peers less frequently. No statistically significant difference was detected between the aggression levels of children in relation to age.

A statistically significant difference was found between the prosocial behavior levels of children with relation to gender. Accordingly, the prosocial behavior point averages of girls were higher than those of boys. This finding is also supported by

previously conducted research. In a study carried out with 257 children between the ages of 4 and 7 (Murphy & Faulkner, 2006), the effect of gender and social position differences in popular and unpopular children on their communication was investigated. The free play times of children were recorded, and sociometric measurements were performed. According to results, it was determined that popular girls adopted a more attentive approach toward conflicts as compared to unpopular girls, and they were more helpful to their peers in difficult situations and more obedient to the rules. No difference was found between popular and unpopular boys in terms of communication skills. Popular girls were defined as more timid than popular boys, while popular boys were defined as more aggressive than popular girls. In general, girls were observed to be more successful than boys in communication. No statistically significant difference was found between the children's prosocial behavior levels in terms of the child's age.

At the end of the analysis performed to determine children's asocial behavior in relation to age and gender, a statistically significant difference was found between the children's antisocial behavior in relation to age. Asocial behavior point averages of children 5 years old were higher than those of children 6 years old. In alignment with this study finding, some researchers (Wellman, 1990; Wellman & Bartsch, 1994) reported that children become more empathetic and sensitive towards other people and build more positive and closer relationships as they grow older. No difference was observed between groups in terms of asocial behavior in relation to gender.

A difference was observed between children's excluded levels in relation to age. Excluded levels of children 5 years old were higher than those of children 6 years old. This finding may be associated with an increase in the children's ability to build more competent relationships within their social environment as they increase in age as a result of their social development. In the early years of life, age is an important factor in terms of learning new social skills, expanding one's social environment and improving relations (Gülay & Akman, 2009). No difference was observed in excluded levels in relation to gender.

In this study, it was established that the hyperactivity levels of children were affected by age and gender. The hyperactivity levels of children 5 years old were higher than those of children 6 years old. In relation to a child's gender, the hyperactivity levels of boys were found to be higher than those of girls. A study, which investigated peer rejection in relation to gender (Wood, Cowan, & Baker, 2002), included 76 children between the ages of 3 and 5. According to the results observed in both girls and boys, oppressive and rude behavior, hyperactivity and shyness were associated with peer rejection. In a study conducted by Thorell and Rydell (2008) with 499 hyperactive children receiving preschool and primary school education, it was determined that age and gender could be effective on hyperactivity level. Accordingly, hyperactivity levels decreased with an increase in age. The highest hyperactivity levels were observed in children receiving preschool education. It was also found that hyperactivity levels of boys of all ages were higher than those of girls. In addition, it was determined that age and gender did not have any significant joint effect on hyperactivity.

It was determined that a child's age did not affect peer victimization. In other related studies (Hanish et al., 2004; Perren & Alsaker, 2006), it was reported that children receiving primary and high school education experienced peer victimization more frequently compared to younger children. In line with this observation, it may be considered that determining the effect of age on peer victimization in preschool period may be more difficult as compared to primary and high school periods. In terms of gender variable, peer victimization among boys was found to be higher as compared to girls. In other words, boys are exposed to peer victimization to a greater extent than girls are. This finding is consistent with the results of other studies. It was reported in previous results that the peer victimization variable may affect aggression. Similarly, it was revealed by another study that there were differences between genders in terms of aggression levels, and boys exhibited more aggressive behavior than girls. With regard to the relationships between aggression-gender and peer victimization-gender, a consistency is observed in study results, as boys who exhibit more aggressive behavior than girls are exposed to peer victimization more frequently than girls. In another study (Gülay, 2008), the peer relations of 461 5-6 year old children were examined with relation to gender, mother's attitude, and education level of parents. According to the study results, boys experience peer victimization more frequently than girls.

In general terms, age or gender is observed to affect all peer relation variables except social position. The results obtained in relation to age are striking, as they indicate that a one-year age difference may be crucial to behavior and peer relations in developmental terms during the preschool period. It was determined that gender is also an important variable that may affect peer relations among young children. Considering the effect of age on various dimensions of peer relations (asocial behavior, excluded and hyperactivity), it is important that teachers focus on peer relations when children begin to come together with their peers in the early childhood period. Children should be motivated at these early ages to develop skills for peer relations.

The gender variable was determined to affect several dimensions (aggression, prosocial behavior, hyperactivity and peer victimization). At this point, the effect of several other variables (e.g. parents' attitudes/behavior towards child rearing) should be investigated, along with the effect of the gender variable. The results of several studies indicate that parental child rearing behaviours and attitudes are shaped as a function of gender (Özyürek, 2004). Parents are rearing their children while taking into account the cultural values for behavioral patterns related to gender roles (Sayın, 2007). Parents' different expectations for boys and girls, in addition to some genetically determined different behaviors of children, may cause children to be reared by their parents according to their gender (Şanlı, 2007). In Turkish culture, boys are expected to be more active, strong, daring and are the ones who protect their rights with aggression if necessary. Girls are expected to be kind, obedient, compliant, altruistic and timid (Köseler, 2009; Yörükoğlu, 2004). These expectations can affect children's behaviour. In addition, the possible harmful effects of guidance given by teachers and families that may cause gender-based

discrimination and lead to extreme differences while shaping children's social behaviors should be brought to light.

Taking the significance of the issue into consideration, research on peer relations in Turkey for preschool-period children should be developed further in both quality and quantity. In these investigations, the peer relations of preschool children should be studied longitudinally and take various variables into consideration. The attention of educators and parents should be called to peer relations during the early years of a child's life.

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Yaş ve Cinsiyet Açısından 5-6 Yaş Çocuklarının Akran İlişkileri (Özet)

Problem Durumu: Okul öncesi dönem, çocukların akran ilişkilerinin temellerinin atıldığı yıllar olmasının yanı sıra akran ilişkilerinin etkileri açısından da önem taşımaktadır. Bu dönemde akranlarla sağlanan başarılı ilişkiler, kısa süreli olarak okula uyumu, duygusal düzeni, akademik başarıyı etkilemektedir. Uzun süreli olarak da ilk akran ilişkilerinde problemler, başarısızlıklar yaşayan çocukların sonraki yıllarda davranış ve sosyal uyumsuzluklarla karşılaşma olasılıkları daha yüksektir.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu çalışmanın amacı, okul öncesi eğitime devam eden 5-6 yaş çocuklarının yaş ve cinsiyet farklılıklarının akran ilişkileri üzerindeki etkisinin incelenmesidir. Bu amaçla aşağıdaki sorulara yanıt aranmıştır: 5-6 yaş çocuklarının akran grubundaki saldırgan davranışları yaş ve cinsiyetlerine göre farklılık göstermekte midir? 5-6 yaş çocuklarının akran grubundaki olumlu sosyal davranışları yaş ve cinsiyetlerine göre farklılık göstermekte midir? 5-6 yaş çocuklarının akran grubundaki sosyal olmayan davranışları yaş ve cinsiyetlerine göre farklılık göstermekte midir? 5-6 yaş çocuklarının akran grubundaki dışlanma düzeyleri yaş ve cinsiyetlerine göre farklılık göstermekte midir? 5-6 yaş çocuklarının akran grubundaki aşırı hareketlilik düzeyleri yaş ve cinsiyetlerine göre farklılık göstermekte midir? 5-6 yaş çocuklarının akran şiddetine maruz kalma düzeyleri yaş ve cinsiyetlerine göre farklılık göstermekte midir?

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Araştırmada, 5-6 yaş çocuklarının akran ilişkilerinin yaş ve cinsiyet açısından incelenmesi tarama modeli ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Örneklem grubu, Denizli ilinde Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'na bağlı on ilköğretim okulunun anasınıfına devam eden, 5-6 yaş grubu 450 çocuk oluşturmuştur. Örneklem grubunda 216 kız (% 48.0), 234 erkek (%52.0) çocuk yer almaktadır. Çocukların yaş ortalaması, 5 yaş, 4 ay, 6 gündür (En az, 4 yıl 28 gün; en çok, 6 yaş, 1 ay, 21 gün). Çalışmada, veri toplama araçları olarak, Kişisel Bilgi Formu, Ladd ve Profilet Çocuk Davranış Ölçeği, Akranlarının Şiddetine Maruz Kalma Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Kişisel Bilgi Formu, araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilmiştir. Ladd ve Profilet Çocuk Davranış Ölçeği 1996'da öğretmenlerin bilgileri doğrultusunda, okul öncesi dönem çocuklarının okulda akranlarıyla olan ilişkilerini değerlendirmek amacıyla, Gary W. Ladd ve Suzan M. Profilet tarafından geliştirilmiş bir ölçme aracıdır. Ölçek, 6 alt ölçekten ve toplam 44 maddeden oluşmaktadır. Güvenirlilik, geçerlik çalışmaları sonucunda, ölçeğin iç tutarlık katsayısı .81 olarak belirlenmiştir. Akranlarına karşı saldırganlık alt ölçeğinin iç tutarlık katsayısı .87, akranlarına karşı yardımı amaçlayan sosyal davranışlar göstermek alt ölçeğinin iç tutarlık katsayısı .88, akranlarına karşı asosyal davranışlar göstermek alt ölçeğinin iç tutarlık katsayısı .84, akranlarına karşı korkulu-kaygılı olma alt ölçeğinin iç tutarlık katsayısı .78, akranları tarafından dışlanma alt ölçeğinin iç tutarlık katsayısı .89, aşırı hareketlilik alt ölçeğinin iç tutarlık katsayısı .83 olarak belirlenmiştir. Akranlarının Şiddetine Maruz Kalma Ölçeği, Akranların Şiddetine Maruz Kalma- Kişisel Değerlendirme Ölçeği'nden yola çıkılarak, 2002'de geliştirilen bir ölçme aracıdır. Ölçekte, akran saldırganlığının dört tipi (fiziksel, dolaylı, doğrudan ve genel) ile ilgili birer tane

olmak üzere toplam dört madde bulunmaktadır. Ölçeğin iç tutarlılık katsayısı, .72 olarak belirlenmiştir. Veri toplama araçları öğretmenler tarafından doldurulmuştur. İstatistiksel analizler, SPSS 13.0 istatistik paket programıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. 5-6 yaş çocuklarının yaş ve cinsiyetlerinin akran ilişkilerine etkisini belirlemek amacıyla İki Boyutlu Varyans Analizi (ANOVA) tekniğinden yararlanılmıştır.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Çocukların saldırganlık düzeylerinde cinsiyete göre istatistiksel açıdan anlamlı bir farklılık görülürken, yaşa göre istatistiksel açıdan anlamlı bir farklılığa rastlanmamıştır. Çocukların olumlu sosyal davranış düzeylerinde cinsiyete göre istatistiksel açıdan anlamlı bir farklılığa rastlanmıştır. Kız çocukların olumlu sosyal davranış puan ortalamaları, erkek çocuklarının puan ortalamalarından anlamlı derecede yüksektir. Çocukların olumlu sosyal davranış düzeyleri arasında yaşa göre istatistiksel açıdan anlamlı bir farklılığa rastlanmamıştır. Yaşa ve cinsiyete göre sosyal olmayan davranış ile ilgili yapılan analiz sonucunda, çocukların sosyal olmayan davranışlarında yaşa göre istatistiksel açıdan anlamlı bir farklılığa rastlanmıştır. Beş yaş çocuklarının sosyal olmayan davranış puan ortalamaları, altı yaş çocuklarının puan ortalamalarından daha yüksektir. Gruplar arasında, sosyal olmayan davranış bakımından cinsiyete göre bir farklılığa rastlanmamıştır. Çocukların dışlanma düzeylerinde yaşa göre farklılığa rastlanmıştır. Beş yaş çocuklarının dışlanma düzeyleri, altı yaş çocuklarının dışlanma düzeylerinden daha yüksektir. Cinsiyete göre ise dışlanma düzeylerinde bir farklılığa rastlanmamıştır. Çalışmada, yaş ve cinsiyetin çocukların aşırı hareketlilik düzeylerini etkilediği ortaya konulmuştur. Beş yaş çocuklarının aşırı hareketlilik düzeyleri, altı yaş çocuklarının aşırı hareketlilik düzeylerinden daha yüksektir. Cinsiyetler arasındaki farka göre ise; erkek çocukların aşırı hareketlilik düzeyleri, kız çocuklarının aşırı hareketlilik düzeylerinden daha yüksek bulunmuştur. Çocukların yaşının, akranların şiddetine maruz kalma üzerinde etkili olmadığı belirlenmiştir. Cinsiyet değişkeni açısından bakıldığında, erkek çocukların akranların şiddetine maruz kalmalarının, kız çocuklarına göre daha yüksek düzeyde olduğu saptanmıştır.

Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri: Yaşla ilgili olarak sosyal olmayan davranış, dışlanma, aşırı hareketlilik düzeyleri yaşa göre farklılık göstermektedir. Cinsiyet ile ilgili olarak da saldırganlık, olumlu sosyal davranış, aşırı hareketlilik ve akran şiddetine maruz kalma açısından cinsiyetler arasında farklılık bulunmaktadır. Genel olarak 6 yaş çocukları 5 yaşa göre, kız çocukları da erkek çocuklara göre akran ilişkilerinde daha olumlu davranışlar göstermektedirler. Sonuçlar okul öncesi dönemde gelişimsel açıdan bir yıllık yaş farkının ve cinsiyetin davranışlarda ve akran ilişkilerinde önem taşıyabildiğini göstermesi açısından çarpıcıdır. Bu nedenle çocukların erken çocukluk döneminde akranlarıyla bir araya gelmeye başladıkları ilk zamanlardan itibaren eğitimcilerin akran ilişkilerine odaklanması önem taşımaktadır. Çocuklara akran ilişkilerine yönelik beceriler erken yaşlarda kazandırılmaya başlanmalıdır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Akran ilişkileri, yaş, cinsiyet, okul öncesi dönem.