

STUDY ON BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Assistant Professor Emine Eratay
Department of Special Education
Education Faculty
Abant İzzet Baysal University

emineeratay@superonline.com

Eratay_e@ibu.edu.tr

INTRODUCTION

- ▣ It's of great importance for the children to be in a healthy and good condition in terms of their emotional functions. Emotional functions and development of children are managed under the impact of the family and families contribute directly in the development of the child by creating a normal emotional climate and via their feedbacks, and indirectly with their responses to child's emotions. In this context, the early childhood period is shaped at home in some aspects (Hastings, McGrill; 2008).

Children encounter problems in the early childhood period which is shaped at home and during their next development and growing periods, and display some emotional, behavioral and habitual changes against these problem (Sargın; 2001). Structural characteristics inherited with birth and environmental problems play a role in the healthy adjustment of children to their environment. These two factors including the initial hereditary characteristics and subsequent experiences present the power to cope with problems to some children while result in adjustment disorders in some. Behavioral problems and adjustment disorders are generally used as synonyms. It may be misleading to assess the common behavioral problems encountered in childhood as a symptom of maladjustment when;

- ❑ The current development period of the child
- ❑ The prevalence and severity of the symptom
- ❑ The diversity of symptom
- ❑ Continuity of symptom are taken into consideration (Arı Başaran, 1986).

- ▣ If temporary adjustment disorders that emerge as a reaction against development do not disappear in the expected short terms and continue in the following ages then such should be defined as real adjustment disorders. Such adjustment disorders are considered as a symptom of a mental illness or mental problems (Aydoğmuş, 1994).

- ▣ Reasons for maladjustment in childhood can be listed as physical reasons including heritage, physical disabilities, illnesses, internal secretion glands disorders, accidents and shocks; failure in meeting biological, psychological and social fundamental needs; factors arising from the structure of family, parent relations, close environment of the child, school, social and economical factors and environment-socioeconomic reasons including incorrect education (Çağlar, 1981).

- ▣ Types of maladjustment, mental problems in childhood can be categorized under four main categories:

- ▣ **1- Behavior Disorders:** Symptoms are constant bad temper, nervousness, incompatibility, pugnacity, skipping school, stealing, arsoning, constant rebellion and violating rules. In behavioral disorders, child reflect his/her inner conflicts to behaviors due to various mental and physical reasons. The relations of the child with the environment is always tense and have conflicts.

- ▣ **2- Emotional Disorders:** The problems under this category are mental symptoms that disturb the child himself/herself more than his/her environment. Fears, apprehensions, obsessive thoughts, sleeping disorders, stammering, twitching and similar problems can be given as examples. Children with such symptoms are tense, distrustful and shy children who do not have very bad relations with their environment. They

- ▣ **3- Habitual Disorders:** Symptoms related with the irregularity of habits such as thumb sucking, masturbation, bed wetting and encopresis can be categorized under this group.

▣ **4- Severe Psychological Disorders:**

Psychological illnesses that constantly destroy the adjustment of the child in every field and which are also defined as schizophrenia and psychosis are categorized under this group (Yörükoğlu, 1994).

METHOD

- ▣ **Study Method:** Survey model is used in the study. According to Karasar (1991), general survey models are survey arrangements conducted on the complete universe or a group, sample or sampling to be taken from that universe in order to conclude a general judgment about the universe at a stage consisting of many elements. Single or relational surveys can be conducted with general survey models. Arrangements that would enable both single and relational surveys are implemented in many studies.

- ▣ **Universe and Sampling:** In this study, sampling has not been preferred and the complete universe has been reached. A total of 638 children consisting of 322 girls and 316 boys at the age group of 4-6 in 4 preschools and 17 kindergartens in the city center of Bolu has been reached in spring semester of 2007 - 2008.

Data Collection Instruments:

- ▣ Behavior Problems Checklist: This instrument has been developed by Hacettepe University, Department of Child Development and Education. First section of the Checklist covers titles such as age of the child, profession of parents, education status of parents, presence of other adults in the family, birth sequence of the child and income status of the family. Second section consists of 3 main sections and 30 items including

A- Adjustment Disorders;

a- Sleeping disorders

b- Fears

c- Speech disorders

d- Ticks

B- Behavior Disorders

C- Habit Disorders.

Items are checked according to Yes and No options.

Data Analysis

- ▣ Data has been recorded on SPSS software and analyzed with Pearson Chi-Square analyses. According to Büyüköztürk (2003), this technique tests whether there is a meaningful relationship between categorical variables with two classifications. Presence of a relation between two variables show that answers at a level of one variable differ in other variable levels. Analysis is used to test presence of a meaningful relation between two variables, of which one is

- ▣ Analysis is used to test whether there is a meaningful relation between two variables one of which is categoric and the other is ordinal. Chi-square test actually tests whether there is a meaningful difference between the figures-values observed in cells that are formed according to the levels of two categoric variable (number of lines x number of columns) and the expected figures- values.

Data Collection

- ▣ Upon receiving permission from National Education Directorate of Bolu in 2007 – 2008 spring semester, Behavior Problems Checklists have been distributed at a number equal to the number of children and parents were asked to fill in the forms with the help of teachers. Filled in forms were taken into assessment.

FINDINGS

- ▣ Results of the chi-square tests on whether there is a relation between behavior problems and age, gender, birth sequence of the child, age, profession, education level and income of parents, number of siblings in the family and presence of another adult in the family shall be summarized in tables. The following tables show those related with behavior problems of the child and the irrelevant findings have not been shown for the sake of brevity of the article.

FINDINGS RELATED WITH BEHAVIOR PROBLEM OF THE CHILD AND THEIR RELATION WITH VARIABLES:

1- Relation between Behavior Problem and Age of the Child: As a result of the chi-square analysis;

No meaningful relation has been reported

- a) between the age of the child and adjustment disorders; [$\chi^2 = 3.528$ $p > .05$];
- b) between the age of the child and behavior disorders; [$\chi^2 = 9.345$ $p > .05$];
- c) between the age of the child and habit disorders; [$\chi^2 = 36.219$ $p > .05$].

2- Relation between Behavior Problems and Gender of Child: As a result of the chi-square analysis;

No meaningful relation has been reported

- a) between the gender of the child and adjustment disorders; [$\chi^2 = .191$ $p > .05$];
- b) between the gender of the child and behavior disorders; [$\chi^2 = .102$ $p > .05$];
- c) between the gender of the child and habit disorders [$\chi^2 = .192$ $p > .05$].

3- Relation between Behavior Problems and Age of Mother: As a result of the chi-square analysis:

No meaningful relation has been reported

- a) between the age of the mother and adjustment disorders of the child; [$\chi^2 = 7.985$ $p > .05$];
- b) between the age of the mother and behavior disorders of the child; [$\chi^2 = 3.909$ $p > .05$];
- c) between the age of the mother and habit disorders of the child; [$\chi^2 = 17.450$ $p > .05$].

4- Relation between the Behavior Problems and Father's Age: As a result of the chi- square analysis:

No meaningful relation has been reported

- a) between father's age and adjustment disorders of the child; [$\chi^2 = 8.312$ $p > .05$];
- b) between father's age and behavior disorders of the child; [$\chi^2 = 3.421$ $p > .05$];
- c) between father's age and habit disorders of the child [$\chi^2 = 5.292$ $p > .05$].

5- Relation between Behavior Problems and Mother's Profession: As a result of the chi-square analysis:

- a) A meaningful relation has been reported between the profession of the mother and adjustment disorders of the child since [$\chi^2 = 14.311$ $p = 0.006 < .05$] and an increase has been observed in the children of housewife and tradeswomen mothers.

Table 1- Distribution by Mother's Profession and Adjustment Disorders of Child

Adjustment Disorders	Yes	No	Total
Mother's Profession			
Unemployed (housewife)	359	89	448
Educator	39	2	41
Civil Servant	55	4	59
Worker	40	5	45
Tradeswomen	8	3	11
Merchant	3	0	3
Farmer	2	1	3
Other	23	5	28
Total	529	109	638

- b) No meaningful relation has been reported between the profession of the mother and adjustment disorders of the child [$\chi^2 = 7.541$ $p > .05$], and
- c) between the profession of the mother and habit disorders of the child [$\chi^2 = 2.527$ $p > .05$].

6- Relation between Behavior Problems and Father's Profession: As a result of the chi-square analysis:

- a) a meaningful relation has been reported between the profession of the father and adjustment disorders of the child [$\chi^2 = 17.989$ $p = 0.008$ $p < .05$]; and adjustment disorders have been reported to be more common in the children of unemployed and tradesmen fathers.

Table 2- Distribution of Adjustment Disorders of Child by Father's Profession

Adjustment Disorders Father's Profession	No	Yes	Total
Unemployed	16	7	23
Educator	41	1	42
Civil Servant	132	20	152
Worker	165	46	211
Tradesmen	72	20	92
Merchant	17	2	19
Farmer	5	0	5
Other	81	13	94
Total	529	109	638

- b) No meaningful relation has been reported between father's profession and behavior disorders of the child; [$\chi^2 = 8.103$ $p > .05$];
- c) and between father's profession and habit disorders of the child; [$\chi^2 = 4.316$ $p > .05$].

7- Relation between Behavior Problems and

Mother's Education Level: As a result of the chi-square analysis made, no meaningful relation has been reported :

- a) between the education level of the mother and adjustment disorders of the child [$\chi^2=3.272$ $p>.05$];
- b) between the education level of the mother and behavior disorders of the child [$\chi^2=8.112$ $p>.05$];
- c) and between the education level of the mother and habit disorders of the child; [$\chi^2=9.795$ $p>.05$].

8- Relation between Behavior Problems and Education Level of Father: As a result of the chi-square analysis, a meaningful relation has been reported:

- a) between father's education level and adjustment disorders of the child; [$\chi^2=1.138$ $p>.05$]; and
- b) between father's education level and behavior disorders of the child; [$\chi^2 = 14.079$ $p=0.003$ $p<.05$]. Behavior disorders have been reported more in children of fathers with lower education levels.
- c) No meaningful relation has been reported between the education level of father and habit disorders of child; [$\chi^2 = 5.329$ $p>.05$].

Table 3- Distribution of Behavior Disorders in Children by Education Level of Father

Behavior Disorders	Father's Education		
	Yes	No	Total
Illiterate	1	1	2
Literate	4	2	6
Elementary School	91	45	136
Secondary School	65	30	95
High School	186	47	233
University	133	31	164
Total	480	156	636

9- Relation between Behavior Problems and Income Status of Family: As a result of chi-square analysis:

- a) A meaningful relation has been reported between the income status of family and adjustment disorders of child; [$\chi^2 = 3.142$ $p > .05$];
- b) and between the income status of the family and behavior disorders of the child; [$\chi^2 = 10.468$ $p = 0.063$ $p < .05$], it's been further concluded that behavior disorders decrease as the income level increases.
- c) No meaningful relation has been reported between the income status of the family and habit disorder of the child [$\chi^2 = 3.992$ $p > .05$].

Table 4- Distribution of Behavior Disorders in Child by Income Status of Family

Income	Behavior Disorders		Total
	Yes	No	
Not any	6	5	11
Under minimum wage	18	11	29
Minimum wage	88	37	125
500-700	158	51	209
701-1000	105	28	133
Higher than 1000	105	24	129
Total	480	156	636

10- Relation between Behavior Problems and Number of Siblings in the Family: As a result of the chi-square analysis, meaningful relations have been reported between :

- a) Number of siblings in the family and adjustment disorders of the child [$\chi^2 = 4.982$ $p > .05$];
- b) Number of siblings in the family and behavior disorders of the child; [$\chi^2 = 8.102$ $p > .05$];
- c) Number of siblings in the family and habit disorders of the child [$\chi^2 = 15.655$ $p = 0.008$ $p < .05$].

Table 5- Distribution of Habit Disorders of the Child by the Number of Siblings

Habit Disorders	Yes	No	Total
N/A	148	0	148
1	238	8	246
2	167	4	171
3	55	5	60
4	7	0	7
5	5	1	6
Total	620	18	638

11- Relation between Behavior Problems and Presence of Other Adults in the Family: As a result of chi-square analysis, meaningful relations have been reported between:

- a) presence of other adults in the family and adjustment disorders of child; [$\chi^2 = .705$ $p > .05$];
- b) Presence of other adults in the family and behavior disorders of the child; [$\chi^2 = .921$ $p > .05$];
- c) Presence of other adults in the family and habit disorders of child; [$\chi^2 = .477$ $p = 0.008$ $p < .05$].

Table 6- Distribution of Habit Disorders of Child by Presence of Other Adults in Family

Habit Disorders	Yes	No	Total
Presence of Other Adults in the Family			
Yes	142	16	158
No	440	40	480
Total	582	56	638

DISCUSSION

- ▣ The findings of the study showed that there is no meaningful relation between the behavior problems and the age of the child. This may be due to the fact that the children are at an age group of 4-6 and therefore their ages are close.
- ▣ No meaningful relation has been noted between behavior problems and the gender of the child. This finding of the study supports the findings of Cai, Kaiser and Hancock (2004); Dodge, findings of Pettit and Bates (1994), findings of Doctoroff and Arnold (2004). On the other hand, the findings of Leadbeater and Bishop (1994); Kwon (2007); Throll and Rydell (2008) are not supported by the findings of this study.

- ▣ No relation has been reported between the age of parents and behavior problems in this study. In this study, ages of parents are classified under 8 groups consisting of under 20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50 and older than 51. In this study, there are 4 mothers under the age of 20 (n=4) and only 1 (n=1) mother at and over the age of 51. There are 3 fathers at and under the age 20, and 6 fathers at and over the age of 51 under this study. This conclusion may arise from the fact that parents are either too young or too old. This finding of the study partially supports the findings of Leadbeater and Bishop (1994) who studied adolescent mothers.

- ▣ A meaningful relation has been reported between the profession of mother under this study and adjustment disorders of the child including sleeping disorders, fears, speech disorders and ticks; and an increase has been noted in the adjustment disorders of the children of housewife mothers. This finding of the study supports the findings of Dufrene, Doggett, Henington and Watson (2007); Kwon (2007). Similarly, identification of a relation between the profession of father and adjustment disorders of the child supports the findings of Dufrene et al. (2007) and Kwon (2007).

- ▣ No relation has been reported between the education status of the mother and behavior problems of child. On the other hand, a relation has been noted between the father's education status and habit disorders including thumb sucking, nail biting, nocturnal enuresis, diurnal enuresis, and encopresis. This finding of the study supports the findings Dufrene et al. (2007); Dodge, Pettit and Bates (1994) partially and the findings of Hastings and McGrill (2008) at high rates.

- ▣ Identification of a relation between the income status of the family and behavior disorders of the child in the study is in line with the studies of Hamre et al. (2007); Dufrene et al. (2007); Doctoroff and Arnold (2004); Cai et al. (2004); Dodge et al. (1994) who reported a relationship between the socio-economic status and behavior problems.

- ▣ The relationship between the number of siblings and presence of other adults in the family and habit disorders can be explained with the facts that family and children are in need of social support, there is a correlation between social support and life stress, instability of peer groups is related with behavior problems, presence of other adults and high number of siblings at home may increase family stress, therefore this may affect the behaviors of the child.

Recommendations

- ▣ Recommendations can be listed as implementation of family education programs, social activities for children, effective implementation of behavior changing programs by preschool teachers. Implementation of different checklists, standardization in the Turkish versions of these checklists; use of scales that assess parents – depression, family intelligence etc.- in addition to the problem behaviors of children and examination of their relation with the problem behaviors of children, implementation a checklist on a different the child population outside the city of Bolu are also recommended for further studies.

Limitations

- ▣ This study is limited with the children attending preschools and kindergartens in the city center of Bolu during spring semester of 2007-2008 and responses of the families of the children to Behavior Problems Checklist.