

A Research into the Attitudes of Mothers of Twins and Singletons towards Their Children and the Receptive and Expressive Language Levels of Children

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ABSTRACT This research paper investigates attitudes of mothers receptive and expressive language levels of children. The sample includes 200 mothers and 300 children from central districts of Konya. The Family Life and Child Rearing Attitude Questionnaire, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and Vocabulary and Language Test were used to collect research data. Independent sample t-tests compared the differences between attitudes of mothers of twins and singletons and the differences between receptive and expressive language levels of twins and singletons. To determine the degree of correlation between the attitudes of mothers and the receptive-expressive language levels of children, Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated. The results indicated that mothers of twins exhibited more democratic attitudes and behaviours while mothers of singletons imposed stricter discipline. Additionally, a high negative correlation was found between the scores mothers received-for overprotection, rejection of homemaking role and marital conflict and the expressive language scores of children.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a system of symbols through which feelings, ideas and needs are transferred to others in a community by using the units and rules shared in terms of sound and meaning. People use language to relate and teach ideas, emotions, attitudes, beliefs and value judgments. It is also used to transfer perceptions and experiences regarding life events and, in the broadest sense, one's cultural heritage (Altay 2007; Kucukkaragoz 2007). Language provides the most effective way for children to explore the world, understand complicated situations and compare their own feelings and ideas with varying point of views. It is through the learning of language that children acquire new vocabulary and learn to make sentences combining these words as they begin to develop an awareness of the language rules (Erdogan 2013).

For children, language learning emerges and develops as a consequence of their need to communicate and socialize. Children usually learn to

speak in the course of daily language exchanges in their family environment, namely the social environment surrounded by the family members (Sevinc 2005). In other words, children learn to speak through natural ways in the family environment into which they were born. This learning begins with analyzing and then producing the speech sounds they hear in their environment, and it gradually develops as children produce their first syllables, words and sentences. This natural learning occurs when children imitate speech sounds, especially those made by the mother, in the family environment and assign a meaning to these sounds. Following this imitation period, children learn assorted phrases, sentence combinations and different styles of expression (Asici 2010). They discover the details of language by going through certain stages, such as forming hypotheses, testing these hypotheses where and when necessary and making changes until they attain mastery of a language (Sevinc 2005).

Children need to reach a certain level of maturation and experience a quality learning process to be able to use the language fluently. Their family environment, society and the opportunities provided to the child might lead to negative or positive effects in their language development. In this regard, factors such as socio-economic

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status encourage the child to speak in the family environment. Gender, family relationships, bilingualism, being a twin, health, intelligence and play could also play a role in children's language development (Akyol Koksak 2007; Tumkaya 2008).

The type of the communication between family members (mothers in particular) and the child is highly influential in language development. The language used by the parents, especially by the mother, is considered one of the environmental factors that accelerates and shapes the vocabulary development of children. Mother-child interactions and the form of the mother's communication with the child not only contribute to the social-emotional development of the child and improvement of language skills but also develop the child's cognitive skills, such as understanding, remembering and transferring. Such cognitive development directly affects language development (Connel and Printz 2002; Akyol Koksak 2007; Tumkaya 2008; Asici 2010; Demir and Kuntay 2013).

The impact of a quality parent-child relationship on language development of children has been well documented by a large body of research carried out by Mantzicopoulos (1997), Connel and Printz (2002), Mashburn and Pianta (2006) and Swich (2007). These studies showed that speaking to children is closely connected to their language development. Nilson et al. (2012) suggest that parents have a major effect on the language development of their children. With the help of supportive strategies, parents might influence language development of their children by using more complex syllable forms, increasing the amount of different speech sounds and using different combinations of words.

Being a twin is another important factor affecting children's language development. It is noteworthy that twins understand each other by using fewer words than usual, and the secret language shared by twins (gestures, one-word sentences, abbreviations) takes the place of words and sentences found in normal speech and impedes their language development (Tumkaya 2008). Twins are typically born with some health problems, and the mother's attention in the first months is focused on their fundamental needs. The stress of trying to cope with two children at the same time affects the mother-child interaction and her attitudes towards the children. All these factors, one way or another, might lead to developmental delays.

Recent studies on having twins and the relationship between twins and mothers (Mukaddes et al. 1999; Bryan 2002; Riemann et al. 2012; Hahn et al. 2013) have shown that being a parent to twins involves certain differences. After a multiple birth, the mother has to shoulder the burden of taking care of two children at a time and the effect of this burden on the mother's physical and psychological state makes the maternal bond harder and more complicated to establish. Moreover, children get less individual attention from their mother, which naturally leads to decreased interaction. The mother typically tries to take care of children separately and might not establish the same-quality relationships with twins.

In this sense, it has become more of an issue to investigate mothers of twins and singletons, their communication and interaction with children, their attitudes and the possible effects of these factors on the language development of children. In the light of the study findings, several recommendations have been put forward.

Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the attitudes of mothers of twins and singletons towards their children and the receptive and expressive language levels of their children. In this regard, the following questions will be addressed:

1. Is there a difference between child rearing attitudes of mothers in terms of having twins and singletons?
2. Is there a difference between receptive and expressive language levels of twins and singletons?
3. Is there a relationship between the child rearing attitudes of mothers and receptive and expressive language levels of children?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In the study, the correlation survey method was used to evaluate the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Research Sample

The sample of the research included 200 mothers and 300 children from central districts of Konya. The children's ages ranged from 48 to 66

months. One hundred mothers (50%) in the study group had twins and the other 100 (50%) had singletons; 200 of the children (66.7%) were twins and 100 (33.3%) were singletons.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test

This test was used to determine the receptive and expressive language levels of twins and singletons. The English version was developed by Dunn (1959) and Turkish adaptation was made by Katz et al. (1974). The reliability coefficients in the original version were found to range between 0.64 and 0.84. Concurrent validity was examined for the validity of the study. The correlation with the Stanford-Binet Intelligence test was between 0.82 and 0.86 while this correlation for the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children varied between 0.41 and 0.74. The test consists of 100 cards each with four pictures, and the child is asked to point to the picture corresponding to the word spoken by the researcher (Oner 2008).

Limboş and Wolf's Vocabulary and Language Test

This vocabulary and language test was administered to determine the receptive and expressive language levels of twins and singletons. The test was developed by Limboş and Wolf in 1976 and it was adapted into Turkish by Razon. Measuring child's language ability and vocabulary, the test includes questions that aim to find out how exactly and accurately the child responds to the questions asked. Two sub-sets are included in the test: naming pictures and describing pictures based on their functions. Items unsuitable for Turkish culture were modified by Ugurel and Sermin (Davasligil 1982). In the study by Yildirim (2008), the internal consistency of the test was calculated through Cronbach's Alpha, which was found to be 0.76.

Family Life and Child-Rearing Attitude Questionnaire

The questionnaire was originally developed by Schaefer and Bell (1958) to assess parental relationships and attitudes towards children. Its adaptation to Turkish was made by Guney et al. in 1978. The questionnaire consists of 60 items and five sub-scales: overprotective mothering, democratic attitude and recognition of equality,

rejection of homemaking role, marital conflict and strict discipline. Higher total scores in each sub-test indicate approval of the relevant attitude. Test-retest reliability of the questionnaire ranged from 58 to .88 (Oner 2008).

Data Analysis

Independent samples t-test was used to compare the attitudes of mothers of twins and mothers of singletons and the differences between receptive and expressive language levels of twins and those of singletons. Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the degree of correlation between the attitudes of mothers of twins and singletons and the receptive-expressive language levels of children.

FINDINGS

This section presents the results for the primary objective and for the hypotheses of the research.

Results for the Attitudes of Mothers of Twins and Singletons

The "Family Life and Child-Rearing Attitude Questionnaire" was administered to test the child-rearing attitudes of mothers towards their twins and singletons, and the attitude scores of these mothers were calculated. Table 1 presents the independent samples t-test results for the attitudes of mothers of twins and singletons.

As presented in Table 1, the scores mothers get from the child-rearing attitude questionnaire resulted in a mean score of mothers of twins of ($\bar{X}=6.96$) for the overprotective mothering variable, compared to ($\bar{X}=47.49$) for the mothers of singletons; The mean score for democratic attitude and recognition of equality was ($\bar{X}=27.14$) for mothers of twins, while mothers of singletons scored ($\bar{X}=26.86$). The rejection of homemaking role resulted in a mean score of ($\bar{X}=9.49$) for the mothers of twins and ($\bar{X}=30.49$) for the mothers of singletons; scores for the marital conflict variable were ($\bar{X}=14.72$) and ($\bar{X}=14.48$) for the mothers of twins and those of singletons, respectively. In relation to strict discipline, the mean score was ($\bar{X}=44.62$) for the mothers of twins, compared to $\bar{X}=49.49$ for the other group. The total mean score for the twins group was ($\bar{X}=162.93$), as compared to ($\bar{X}=168.81$) for the singletons-group. In conclusion, the difference between mother groups was found to be significant

Table 1: Independent samples t-test results for the attitudes of mothers of twins and singletons

Attitude sub-scale	Group	N	X	S	sd	t	P
Overprotective Mothering	Mothers of twins	100	46.96	9.50	198	.390	.896
	Mothers of singletons	100	47.49	9.68			
Democratic Attitude and Recognition of Equality	Mothers of twins	100	27.14	3.43	198	.524	.044*
	Mothers of singletons	100	26.86	4.09			
Rejection of Homemaking Role	Mothers of twins	100	29.49	10.18	198	.719	.452
	Mothers of singletons	100	30.49	9.47			
Marital Conflict	Mothers of twins	100	14.72	4.49	198	.382	.499
	Mothers of singletons	100	14.48	4.39			
Strict Discipline	Mothers of twins	100	44.62	10.94	198	3.74	.000*
	Mothers of singletons	100	49.49	7.04			
Total	Mothers of twins	100	162.93	23.70	198	1.79	.415
	Mothers of singletons	100	168.81	22.72			

($p < 0.05$) for in the democratic attitude and equality and in the strict discipline whereas it was not significant for overprotective mothering, rejection of homemaking role and marital conflict. Also, no significant difference was observed between the total mean scores of mothers.

Results for the Receptive and Expressive Language Levels of Twins and Singletons

Two tests were used in the study to measure receptive and expressive language levels of twins and singletons. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test was administered to measure children's receptive language levels and Limbosh and Wolf's Language Test measured their expressive language levels. As seen in Table 2, the mean value for the receptive language of twins was ($\bar{X}=79.10$), and ($\bar{X}=78.92$) for the singletons. As for the expressive language levels of both groups, there was a slight difference between the means of two groups; it was ($\bar{X}=39.36$) for the twins and ($\bar{X}=40.01$) for the singletons. Accordingly, the difference between receptive and expressive language means of children was not significant at .05 level of significance. This finding suggests that receptive-expressive language levels of chil-

dren do not differ in terms of being twins or non-twins.

Results for the Relationship between the Attitudes of Mothers of Twins and Singletons and the Receptive-Expressive Language Levels of Children

The relationship between the attitudes of mothers of twins and singletons and the receptive-expressive language levels of children was examined and the results obtained through Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Test were presented in Table 3. Analysis of the relationship between the attitudes of mothers and their and children's receptive-expressive language levels revealed no correlation between mothers' attitudes and children's receptive language levels, yet the attitudes were negatively correlated with overprotective mothering ($r = -.135$; $p < .05$), rejection of homemaking role ($r = -.192$; $p < .05$) and marital conflict ($r = -.195$; $p < .05$) in terms of expressive language of children. According to this result, expressive language scores of children decrease as the scores of mothers increase in overprotective mothering, rejection of homemaking role and marital conflict.

Table 2: Independent samples t-test results for receptive and expressive language levels of twins and singletons

Receptive-expressive language score	Group	n	X	s	sd	t	p
Receptive language score	Twins	200	79.10	10.83	.766	.130	.897
	Singletons	100	78.92	12.25			
Expressive language score	Twins	200	39.36	5.80	.410	.895	.372
	Singletons	100	40.01	6.05			

Table 3: Results of the Pearson's correlation coefficient test for the relationship between the attitudes of mothers with twins and singletons and the receptive-expressive language levels of children

<i>Twin-singleton mother attitude sub-scales</i>	<i>Pearson's Correlation</i>	<i>Expressive</i>	<i>Receptive</i>
<i>Overprotective Mothering</i>	Pearson's Correlation	-.135	-.093
	P	.057*	.193
	N	197	197
<i>Democratic Attitude and Recognition of Equality</i>	Pearson's Correlation	.121	-.022
	P	.088	.756
	N	198	197
<i>Rejection of Homemaking Role</i>	Pearson's Correlation	-.192	.005
	P	.007*	.939
	N	197	197
<i>Marital Conflict</i>	Pearson's Correlation	-.195	.086
	P	.006*	.225
	N	197	197
<i>Strict Discipline</i>	Pearson's Correlation	-.074	.035
	P	.296	.628
	N	197	197
<i>Total</i>	Pearson's Correlation	.050	.054
	P	.484	.446
	N	200	200

DISCUSSION

The comparison between attitudes of twin-mothers and singleton-mothers revealed no significant difference in overprotective mothering, rejection of homemaking role and marital conflict, yet the difference was significant in democratic attitude and equality and in the strict discipline variables. Also, no significant difference was observed between the total scores of these two groups of mothers. These findings suggest that twins are treated more equally and encouraged to express themselves more openly while singletons are subject to stricter discipline. The reason could be that there is no chance that twin-mothers value one child above the other as they have to take care of two children of the same age at the same time. They might be aware that their democratic attitudes and behaviours will provide benefits to the communication with their children, and it seems that this awareness is turned into behavioural changes by mothers of twins.

Findings related to the language skills of children indicated that there was no significant difference between mean scores of twins and singletons in receptive and expressive language. This suggests that children's receptive and expressive language skills do not differ according to whether or not they are twins. Yilmaz et al. (2013) and Mahieu (2011) compared twins and singletons in terms of their expressive language development and reported no significant differ-

ence between receptive language levels of these children, which is consistent with the findings of this study. Language development emerges in accordance with cognitive development and maturation. The words, sentence forms and content of the speech are affected by the level of cognitive development as well as by environmental factors, such as the form of parent-child communication, the quality of the experiences and the characteristics of the group with which individuals identify (Erden and Akman 2004). As reported by Roberts et al. (2005) and Rodriguez (2009), home-based experiences such as the frequency of reading activities, maternal reading strategies, the pleasure children derive from reading and maternal sensitivity are strong predictors of language and cognitive development of children and their literacy skills. Factors such as maternal sensitivity, the quality of childcare, maternal responsiveness and the frequency of encouraging children to use language might account for the reason why there is no significant difference between receptive-expressive language skills of children.

No correlation was detected between the mothers' attitudes and children's receptive language levels, yet their attitudes were negatively correlated with overprotective mothering, rejection of homemaking role and marital conflict in terms of expressive language of children. In this regard, expressive language scores decreased as the scores of mothers increased in these atti-

tudes. In other words, language development of children is affected negatively by some factors, such as a mother's strict control over her child and her interfering attitudes, being extremely self-sacrificing and expecting the child to understand it, the demands made on the child to be dependent, active and hardworking, the mother's temper and her displeasure at staying with the child for long periods and the impact of marital conflict on childrearing. As seen, the attitudes and behaviours of parents give a true reflection of their beliefs and opinions, and the diversity in child-rearing affects language development as well as all developmental areas. A great deal of research on the quality of childcare has shown that the overall value of child care is closely connected with early language development of children. These studies also found that early language development and the gains from this are particularly connected with responsiveness and sensitivity of caregivers and mothers, as are the frequency of encouraging children to use the language, the focus of maternal attention on child's speech during mother-child interaction and the amount of speech directed to children (Pancsofar and Vernon Feagans 2006; Demir and Kuntay 2013; Stolt 2014). These results obtained through a literature review seem to support the findings of the present study. There is also research suggesting that children lag behind in their language development when their mothers display less sensitivity when interacting with their children and fail to provide adequate care and verbal stimulus for their children (Westerlund and Lagerberg 2008; Vernon Feagans et al. 2012). Oxforda and Spiker (2006) conducted a research study sampling 154 children of adolescent mothers in order to investigate preschool language development. It was reported that mothers with poor verbal skills increased the risk of establishing a low-quality language learning environment in their homes, which negatively affects children's language development.

CONCLUSION

The study results revealed that mothers of twins exhibited more positive attitudes, in while mothers of singletons imposed stricter discipline. It could reasonably be argued, therefore, that mothers of twins give more equal rights to their children, share more with them and encourage their children to express their opinions clearly,

as compared to those of singletons. No significant difference was found between receptive and expressive language levels of twins and singletons. No correlation was observed between the attitudes of mothers and the children's receptive language levels. Nevertheless, a negative correlation was found between attitudes of mothers and expressive language levels of children and between the attitudes of mothers and the subscales of overprotection, rejection of homemaking role and marital conflict. Expressive language scores of children decrease as the scores of mothers in the variables of overprotection, rejection of homemaking role and marital conflict increase.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the results of this research, seminars should be held to help mothers understand their role in child development and especially in language development. Instructive brochures, TV programs and manuals should be prepared and delivered to the mothers. It would be helpful to organize programs regarding positive and negative parental attitudes and their effects on the development of children. Further research comparing twins and non-twins can be conducted to determine the maternal attitudes, factors affecting these attitudes and their possible influences on the development of children. Information about the development of twins could be obtained through conducting research on the physical, intellectual, social and emotional development of twins and comparing them to singletons. Further research can also be carried out into the effects on other developmental areas (social-emotional, intellectual) of the attitudes of mothers with twins and singletons

NOTE

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