The Comparison of Parents and Preschool Teachers' Views about Character and Character Traits in Children[1]

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Abstract

It is a fact that the years of preschool is the foundation of gaining of character traits. The development of character starts in the family and continues authoritatively with school, for this reason the supporting each other of family and school is critical. For the determination of this supporting, the views of teachers and parents about this issue are required. The aim of this study is the examination of parents' and teachers' views about character and character traits of preschoolers. This research was completed with qualitative methods; the sample of study was 10 preschool teachers and 15 parents between 2014-2015 academic years in Adıyaman city center in Turkey. The data of research was collected with a semi-structured interview form developed by researcher. The analysis of data was done with content analysis method. According to the results of research, parents and teachers have different opinions about character. In addition, expectation and observation of parents and teachers show differences in terms of character traits in children. The results shows that parents took the primarily responsibility of development of their children's character in themselves. In addition, teachers have different opinions about the role of parents in the development of character traits of children.

Keywords: Character, character traits, preschool education, parents, teachers.

Introduction

The preschool education is the period of development of children in terms of cognitive, social and physical (Dereli-İman, 2014). This period is also the time of existing development of personality (Sarıçam & Halmatov, 2012; Smetana et al., 2012). For this reason, education taken in these years has an important role in the future life of child and it is the foundation of social life. An important part of social life brought by education is development of character (Berkowitz & Grych, 2000). Gains during preschool education have an effect on the development of character so the quality of education has a critical role in development of character (Alpöge, 2011; Lee, 2013; Tittnich, 1998).

Character is identified as the awareness of positive development in terms of cognitive, social, emotional and ethical (Battistich, 2005). Ryan and Bohlin (1999) handled character as the habits of person. The character was seen complete of ours good and bad habits; these good and bad habits identified us and they affect our reactions to events in life (Mindes & Donovan, 2001).

The question about what time the character develops is an unanswered question and this situation was connected many reasons. These are; character come up as a multiple phenomenon, all items of character has a developmental phrase, individuals show different developmental feature, and the development of items of character takes a long time (Howard, Berkowitz, & Shaeffer, 2004). In addition, it is stated that the development of character begins before birth and the effect of genetic factors on character was come into light. Otherwise, the emotional bond between infant and parent before birth is another important factor on the development of character (Berkowitz, 2002).

All the developmental parts of character show the importance of childhood and adolescence period (Priest, 2007); the development of character begins during infancy and continues during lifelong (Wiley, 2000). However, this development period is not enduring; it shows differences. The child having communication with only family during the infancy, gets in contact with environment during childhood for this reason the environment of school, especially preschool and primary education, is critical on the development of character (Yalız, 2011). According to Lickona, Schaps, and Lewis (2003) character education is the education aiming of development of features and acquisition of behaviors in a particular way of moral extent. In addition, character education is identified as a systematic education study that supports character development of child.

Ryan and Bohlin (1999) stated that the primary responsibility about character development of child belongs to parent and historic process and legislation support this issue. It is known that the members of family have the responsibility of development of right and wrong behaviors of child. According to Guttman (1987; as cited Narvaez,

2006) the primary reasonability of development of character in the under control of family.

Parents hesitate about sharing responsibility in terms of role on the development of character (Oladipo, 2009). It has appeared that parents are reluctant to take the burden off responsibility of character education. In other words, according to the parents the primary responsibility of character education is under the control of them (Killen & Smetana, 2006). Many parents said that the responsibility of character development of children is only belonging to them but some parents said that the inadequacies of them should be supported by school (Narvaez, 2006).

Teachers have an important role in the development of character and the character education (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Killen & Smetana, 2006). To perform this responsibility, teachers should be aware of character education strategies and ensure about this issue and should understand the effects of character education on children (Iyer, 2011).

Teachers have a variety of responsibilities as educators of character and these are listed as ; 1) The teacher should be a positive model for being a good character , 2) Teacher should knows the Professional responsibilities and priorities in the character development and moral life of children, 3) teacher should counts children in moral discourse, 4)teacher should indicates his/her moral view over the issues of ethics and values, 5) teacher should supports children to empathize with others, 6) teacher should creates a positive moral environment in the classroom, 7) teacher should practices activities about ethical behaviors for children (Ryan, 1992).

One of the important factors on the character development of children is teacher (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). According to Dewey (1934; as cited Gibson, 2009), the character of children should develops in a natural and social environment. The school should provide this environment because of its role on the acquisition of social behaviors and recently, discipline problems and increasing of violence in educational institutions necessitate character education (Iyer, 2011).

The perceptions of parents and teachers about character traits are critical on the development of children's character and children's moral development. These perceptions are effective to determine the aims of character education. As we knowledge, there were no studies about this subject in Turkey. For this reason, researchers related with perceptions of parents and teachers about character traits should be required. The aim of this research is examined the views of parents and teachers in regard to preschoolers' character and character traits.

Sub Problems

- According to parents and teachers, what is the mean of character concept?

- According to parents and teachers, which character traits do children about 5-6 years old have?

- According to parents and teachers, how character traits of children develop?

- According to parents, who has roles on the development of character traits of children?

- According to teachers, what is the role of parents on the development of character traits of children?

Method

As the aim of this research is examination of parents and teachers views about character and character traits of children, this study was done with the method of qualitative research.

Study group

The sample of study included 10 preschool teachers and 15 parents whose children had been in the classrooms of these teachers, during 214-2015 academic year in Adıyaman in Turkey. 10 teachers and 15 parents participated voluntarily and to describe the parent-participations, the information about educational level, occupation, the gender of children , the age of children, number of children in the family were presented and the teacher-participations ,the information about gender, professional seniority, the institution where s/he works were presented. 'P' was used for the decoding of parents and 'T' was used for the decoding of teachers.

P1: Secondary school graduate, housewife, girl who went to preschool, having three children.

P2: High school graduate, housewife, girl who went to preschool, having one child.

P3: High school graduate, teacher, boy who went to preschool, having one child.

P4: High school graduate, teacher, girl who went to preschool, having two children.

P5: High school graduate, teacher, boy who went to preschool, having one child.

P6: Secondary school graduate, housewife, boy who went to preschool, having three children.

P7: Secondary school graduate, housewife, girl who went to preschool, having three children

P8: Primary school graduate, housewife, boy who went to preschool, having three children.

P9: Secondary school graduate, housewife, girl who went to preschool, having two children

P10: Bachelor's degree, nurse, girl who went to preschool, having one child

P11: Bacherlor's degree, jeweler, girl who went to preschool, having one child

P12: Master degree, academician, boy who went to preschool, having one child

P13: Bachelor's degree, housewife, girl who went to preschool, having one child

P14: High school degree, police, girl who went to preschool, having one child.

P15: Secondary school graduate, housewife, girl who went to preschool, having three children

T1: Woman, working at preschool, seven-year teacher

T2: Woman, working at preschool, three-year teacher

T3: Woman, working at nursery class, six-year teacher

T4: Woman, working at nursery class, one-year teacher

T5: Woman, working at preschool, two-year teacher

T6: Woman, working at preschool, six-year teacher

T7: Woman, working at nursery class, fifteen-year teacher

T8: Woman, working at preschool, twelve-year teacher

T9: Woman, working at preschool, thirteen-year teacher

T10: Woman, working at preschool, eighteen-year teacher

Data Collection

The parent- interview form about the character and character traits of preschoolers was developed by researchers. The form includes two parts; the first part involves questions about demographic information (educational status, occupation, the gender of child who went to preschool, the number of children in the family), the second part involves eight questions to take opinion of parents about the character and character traits of children. The teacher-interview form was also developed by researchers and it includes two parts; the first part involves questions about demographic information (gender, professional seniority, the working institution) and the second part involves seven questions to take opinion of teacher about the character and character traits of children.

Data Analysis

For the analysis of data, content analysis was used and the interview forms taken from 15 parents and 10 teachers were hold after detail examination. For parents P1-P15 and for teachers T1-T10 codes were given. The categories of research were determined according to aims and they took their final form after the examination of the researcher and two experts. For answers of each question, categories were identified and given in the tables. Each table was evaluated in itself, in this context direct citations were transferred to reflect viewpoints and revive the described conditions for readers.

Reliability and Validity Studies

The all questions are semi-structured and determined according to the aims and sub-aims of research. The literature review and experts opinions had effects on the determination of questions. For the content validity, opinions of three experts of early childhood education, psychological counseling and one sociologist were asked.

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) suggested to enhance the reliability is to seek the help of another researcher for the results to be approved (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In order to determine the consistency (internal reliability) of the data collected from the answers written by the teachers and parents, a second researcher examined each main theme, sub-theme and codes with related quotations. Then, two researchers debated for agreement in the controversial codes and themes. To increase the reliability of the study, the displayed structure was presented to two other researchers who were both field and qualitative research experts, and they were asked to examine the relevance of this structure. In line with the views of the experts, the reliability of the study was calculated using the reliability formula (Reliability = Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement) x 100) proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). The calculation showed 83.33% agreement for parents' character concept, 75% agreement for teachers' character concept, 76.92% agreement for parents' character traits, 84.21% agreement for teachers' character traits, 75% agreement for parents' methods of character traits development, 81.81% agreement for teachers' methods of character traits development. This rate is accepted as reliable as it is over 70% (Miles & Huberman 1994). As for the internal reliability, the research report was submitted to a qualitative research expert. Based on the views and recommendations of the expert, necessary proofreading were done in the report.

Results

Findings Acquired from Parents Intended for Character Concept

Parents' answers for "The first thing that comes to your mind, when you heard the word of character?" question were categorized, and it was shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Parents' Expressions about Character Concept

The first thing that comes to your mind, when you heard the word of character?		
	Sub-categories	**Expressed**
	Personality	*personality structure
		*Personality of person
	Self Confidence	*having self confidence means having everything
Unskilled traits		
	Virtue	*being a virtuous person
	Honesty	*being a honest person
	Moral	*the morals of person
		*morals come to mind, living and speaking morally
	Fearlessness	*dreadnaught

Skilled traits	Behavior	*I'm just saying that compliance of behaviors * integrity of behaviors
	Achievement	*to succeed of child *successful person is already character wise
	Client	*having a job
	Social status	*having a good status in the society *The status in the society is his/her character

Findings Acquired from Teachers Intended for Character Concept

Teachers' answers for "The first thing that comes to your mind, when you heard the word of character?" question were categorized, and it was shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' Expressions about Character Concept

The first thing that comes to your mind, when you heard the word of character?		
	Sub-categories	**Expressed**
Unskilled traits	Personality	*personality traits *the personality of person
	Self-confidence	*the emotion of self-confidence
	Habit	*the habit of person
	Moral quality	* the moral quality of person
Skilled traits	Behavior	*Behaviors of person *signified behaviors
	Adaptation	*complying with the regulations

According to these results, consensus of parents and teachers under the theme of unskilled traits about character concept is 'personality and self-confidence'. Under the theme of skilled traits, the character concept is thought as 'behavior'. However, generally parents and teachers have different views about the definition of character; the components of character were perceived differently by parents and teachers. In addition to, parents expressed the character concept with more words in proportion of teachers (P=11, T=6 words). It can be said that identification of character –'achievement, having a job and the status in the society'- according to parents is under the effects of their experiences. In the circumstances, it can be expressed that experiences have effects on the determination of perception of concept.

Findings Acquired from Parents Intended for Character Traits

Parents' answers for "Which character traits do 5-6 years old children have?" question were categorized, and it was shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Parents' Expressions about Character Traits

Which character traits do 5-6 years old children have?		
	Sub-categories	**Expressed**
Positive character traits	Being honest	* trueness, honesty ,respect and all these
	Being respectful	*being respectful is important
	Self confidence	*Child should have self confidence and others…
	Being sharer	*who knows to share..
	Be filled with compassion	*Being compassionate… for me according to this age
	Not to be scamp	*..for me they shouldn't be scamp…
	Knowing the rules	*…rules which ensures the social order….
	Having responsibility	*.. I think it as a having the sense of responsibility
	Having sense of self	*…. I think it as having the sense of self
	Being calm	*… this age is complicated but they must be calm
	Having positive relationship with peers	*..they should have positive relationship with peers
	Knowing the right and wrong	*… They should know the right and wrong, being honesty.
	Not being egoist	*not being egoist … all of these…
	Being happy	*.. They should be happy with small things
	Being helpful	*..being helpful ...all of these for this age
Negative character traits	Being careless	*..they are careless according to me this age group is always like this
	Palter	* for this age they should not behave capriciously….
	Straggle	* this age group is more dispersed according to me …
	Being introverted	* according to my observations and knowledge they are clam ….
	Begrudge	* for me the basic character of them is being begrudge ….

Findings acquired from teachers intended for Character Traits

Teachers' answers for "Which character traits do 5-6 years old children have?" question were categorized, and it was shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Teachers' Expressions about Character Traits

Which character traits do 5-6 years old children have?		
	Sub-categories	**Expressed**
Positive character traits	Being honest	* first of all they should be honest *..not to tell a lie…
	Being sharer	*…. Knowing to share….
	Self confidence	* having self confidence….
	Being respectful	*…. Also being respectful
	Being happy	*…being warm-heartedness
	Being emotional	*.. traits that come to my mind is sensuality
	Being social	*….being social…
	Feeling an empathy	*…..showing empathy towards.
	Being keen on	*…they should be curious…..
	Being helpful	*….they should be helpful…
	Having responsibility	*…a sense of responsibility …
	Knowing the rules	*…children know the rules…
Negative character traits	Fulling of action	*they full of action
	Being aggressive	*…they can be aggressive …
	Being careless	*…they show aprosexia
	Obstinate person	*…being stubborn….

All of these findings show that: the number of positive character traits of children according to parents (n=15) is upward of according to teachers (n=12). When examined of negative character traits , character traits determined by parents are different from teachers' but the views of parents and teachers combined only one character traits that is 'being careless'. The expected from positive character traits of 5-6 years old children by parents and teachers are listed as ; 'being honesty, being respectful, self confidence, being sharer, having the responsibility, being happy and being helpful'. Generally these results show that the expectation of parents and teachers is different in terms of character traits of 5-6 years old children.

The Methods of Development of Character Traits; Findings Acquired from Parents

Parents' answers for "How do the character traits of your child develop?" question were categorized, and it was shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Parents' Expressions about Methods of Character Traits Development

How do the character traits of your child develop?	
Sub categories	**Expressed**
With communication	*…I think it can be with talking ….
Lovingly	*…….. exhibition love to child….
With rules	*…… a strong character will be existed with rules
With modeling	*….. showing example behaviors
With environment	*a good environment…..develop….
With education /school	*……. For this reason it should be developed in school

The Methods of Development of Character Traits; Findings Acquired from Teachers

Teachers' answers for "How do the character traits of your child develop?" question were categorized, and it was shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Teachers' Expressions about Methods of Character Traits Development

How do the character traits of children develop?	
Sub categories	**Expressed**
With communication	* talking the positive behaviors…..
With stories	*…. I recognize during the activities of story
With music	*…..with music….it can be done with this
With modeling	*….the behaviors of family can be developed …
With rewards	* giving rewards to positive behaviors
With connivance	*….. to ignore …..
With play	* with playing…..
With dance	*……. With dances , it can be done by this way
With drama	*……. Especially with drama.

It can be said that parents and teachers appropriate different methods for the development of character traits of children according to findings. In addition to this, the views of parents and teachers intersect on the method of 'communication and being model'. The methods of parents are generally 'the communication with their children' and 'behaviors towards to children'. The methods of teachers are seen as their procedures during the education.

According to Parents, Who Has Roles on the Development of Character Traits of Their Children?

Regarding the fourth sub-problem of research, parents were asked the question of 'who has roles on the development of character traits of your children?'. The answers of parents; mother-father (n=12), family members- sister, siblings, grandmother, grandfather, uncle- (n=6), teachers (n=3), friends and social circle (n=3). In the direction of these answers, it can be said that mother-father has furthest role on the

development of character traits of children. Example, P1: 'I think, me and father have effects on the development. In general, the child sees us and also spends time at school'. P3: 'I think mother has more effects and then the effects of father come. I think my child took the character traits of obstinacy from me and self confidence from father and the other traits were taken both of us'. At the same time, parents who have extended family indicated that the other family members have effects on the character development of their children. Example, P3: 'Mother, father, grandfather and uncles because the child spend time with them and under the effects of them'. P4: 'Mother, father and sisters affects the child, present, the character of my child is changeable and gets it together from everyone.' The effects of teachers are seen according to answers of parents; two mothers said that they remained incapable and teachers affect. Example, P12: 'They listen their teachers and fathers but not to listen their mothers, sometimes my child is under the effects of brother and when he spends his time with brothers, he plays hob with'. P13: 'after starting to school, he started to not to do my prohibitions. His teachers is very well about this issue and I always say that my child did not listen to me, his listened to teacher'.

The Views of Teachers about the Role of Family on the Development of Character Traits of Children

Regarding to the last sub-problems of study, the question of 'what is your opinions about the roles of parents during the development of character traits of children?' were asked and all teachers only mentioned the dimension of behaviors of parents on the development character traits of children. Two teachers said that the full responsibility about development of character traits of children was under the control of families. Example, T1: 'I think that the effects of family are one hundred percent, absolutely, everything is coming from family'. T6: 'Families are more important, they are effective on the acquisition of behaviors, for some behavior change is difficult for teachers for this reason the family is effective.' Two teachers expressed that the primary reasonability about character development of children was under the control of family but for the rehabilitation of negative behaviors they saw themselves more effective. Example, T8: 'first of all, it is the assignment of mother and father, the child came to us with attained behaviors and we just only decrease the negative behaviors'. Teachers criticized families about the development of character traits of children and they reflected their discomforts about this issue. Example, T4: 'Families do not take interest in, you know that the meaning of treat with honors is not being interested. They let absorb and make children drink but principal interest is not shown. The teacher is more effective, children listen us and rejoice because of our loving, not any family do not spare time like us.' according to all results, it can be said that teachers have different views about the roles of families on the development of character traits of children.

Discussion

When the views of parents and teachers about character concept compare, it is seen that they share the same opinion under the theme of 'unskilled'. Parents and teachers firstly said 'personality and self confidence', when they were asked the concept of character. However, under the other theme 'skilled', parents and teachers shared different views. The situation shows that parents and teachers completely do not identify the concept of character and they interpreted according to their experiences and expectations. The expectation of parents is achievement and social status of children, the expectation of teachers is course of actions according to the rules of society. Correspondingly to views of parents, Franciamore (2014) found out that families were not acquaintance with concept and extent of character and they identified it according to their experiences. According to the result of study of Franciamore (2014), for parents, the mean of character is; positive social behaviors, how children behave, how children communicate, the positive development of children, the teaching of right and wrong, the teaching of how to behave and how to deal with others and it had been started at home and continued at school and their moral structure.

When the examination of views of parents and teachers about character traits of 5-6 years old children; the expectation of parents from children is listed as; being honesty, being respectful, being dispersed, being jealous and being introverted. The expectation of teachers is being sharer and having self confidence. It can be said that the experience of parents with their children and the experience of teachers in classrooms have effects on this different expectations.

When the examination of opinions of parents and teachers about how character traits of children develops; parents indicated that the development of character traits of children will be with education/school, environment and rules. According to teachers, the stories, playing, drama and talking would be effective on the development of character traits. And the methods of teachers are seen as the activities in the classroom, they think these activities as a development method. In the views of parents, the school was seen effective and the environment of children was also effective in terms of development of character. In addition to this, the discipline view of parents is seen another method. It can be said that the attitudes of parents and teachers to children and formal education affect the appearance of this difference between parents and teachers.

According to parents, mother and father have more effective roles on the development of character traits of children. They also gave the other family members and teachers. Correspondingly to this result, Ryan and Bohlin (1999) said that the primary responsibility about character development of children was under the control of mother and father. According to Guttman (1987; as cited Narvaez, 2006) the family is first rank responsible on the formed of character traits of children. Nonetheless, Gökçek (2007) found that families had not found adequate the character education in home and for this reason educators of preschool education can give a good education in terms of

character development. In addition, according to families, the character education is given not only families but also the support of teachers should be provided. According to all these results of researches, even though parents see themselves the first responsible about the development of character traits of children, they think that the support of school should be provided.

When the examination views of teachers about the roles of families during the development of character traits of children, it can be seen that they showed different opinions. These views are listed as; the all responsibility should be under the control of family, the primary responsibility is under the family but they are also effective and the all responsibility should be under the control of them because of behaviors of parents. Correspondingly to this result, Ateş (2013) found similar finding and indicated the inadequate of families about the teaching of values. In addition, Bakdemir (2010) said that in the character education, school, family and the society should be cooperate. All of these results show that teachers know their effects on the character development of children and the cooperation with families also has effects on the character education.

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