

# An Analysis of the Mother and Child Education Program's Effects on the Relationship between Mothers and Their Five- or Six-Year-Old Children

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of the Mother and Child Education Program on the relationship between mothers and their five- or six-year-old children. The study used an experimental design of pretest-posttest-monitoring test with a control group. The participants consisted of 50 preschool children aged five or six along with their mothers. Twenty-five were in the experimental group and 25 were in the control group. Members of the experimental group participated in the Mother and Child Education Program once a week for ten weeks. The study data were collected using the Child-Parent Relationship Scale developed by Pianta in 1992 to evaluate the parent-child relationship and adapted to Turkish language by Akgün and Yeşilyaprak (2010). The NCSS 2007 (Number Cruncher Statistical System-Kaysville, Utah, USA) was used for statistical analyses. The Independent Samples t-test, Mann-Whitney U test, Paired Samples t-test and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were used to compare quantitative data. Significance was evaluated at the levels of  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$ . The findings of this study showed a difference between the mother-child relationship scores of the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group ( $p < 0.05$ ), and that the effects of the education program continued long-term.

**Keywords:** mother, child, mother-child relationship

## 1. Introduction

Family is an organization that includes interpersonal relationships and is governed by certain rules. This concept involves all of the rules that shape interaction between the individuals within a family (Gordon, 2014). The functions of family include ensuring the perpetuation of the family into future generations, looking after and protecting children, giving children feelings of confidence, introducing compatible people to the society, and educating children (Berk, 2013; Erkan, 2010). Family also can be the cause of serious emotional disturbance, tension, and conflict. Domestic conflict, child abuse, limited relationships with only sleeping and eating, being prevented, failures, and emotional or other dissatisfactions are problems commonly encountered in family life. Because of its complexity, the family environment is extremely difficult to fully analyze (Gander & Gardiner, 2010). It has been observed that emotional skills, cognitive skills, and especially social relationships can be improved among children who learn and apply social skills in preschool period. Children who establish healthy and successful social relationships will sustain these relationships in the future and will grow up to be individuals who fit into society, easily express themselves, have more academic success than their peers, and are happy (Gülây & Akman, 2009). Preschool period is a significant period for the development of positive emotions. Children who are accepted and encouraged by adults grow up to be emotionally healthy, while neglected and abused children develop social and mental health problems. Therefore, children who grow up in a healthy environment are able to establish positive relationships more easily (Smith, 2014). Family relationships in the first five years of life are very important in the formation of an individual's personality. Parental love is the main factor that affects children's socialization, and the social-biological heritage of humans is entrusted to the mother's care (Adler, 2005). Social interaction starts in family. Social skills develop starting with children's first relationships with their parents (Magill-Evans & Harrison, 2001). The mother-child relationship is an important

factor that helps children to perceive and evaluate both their environment and themselves. The children whose needs are appropriately met see themselves as valuable beings, and they perceive their environment as a valuing and reliable environment. In time, they reflect this feeling of confidence to the external world. They play an effective role in their environment, and they also affect and change their environment, which includes changing their parents (Coleman & Karraker, 2000; Myers, 1996; D'Aoust, 2008).

Mothers should be the primary adults who fulfill a child's need for love, and they should support their children so that they acquire self-confidence. The discipline and education that mothers provide to their children will be of quality in an environment where children are sufficiently supported (Tezel Şahin, 2014). Children in this type of environment will grow up as brave and in harmony with society. The quality of the interaction between mothers and their children is important for children's healthy development and social harmony. The mother-child relationship and its impact on children's development play an important role in children's future social relationships. Parents can positively affect their children by spending quality time with them. The conclusions children draw from individual and social relationships based on the quality of their parental relationships are among the most important of their early life experiences. Especially, the fact that the relationships between mothers and children show some variances raises the expectation that children will have various social relationships in the future (Kartal, 2013; Kıldan, 2014; Miller, 2008; Özgün, 2013; Santrock, 2015).

Today, people are more aware of the importance of healthy mother-child relationships in order for children to develop healthy personalities and fit in their environment (Çağdaş & Seçer, 2006). The mother-child relationship begins at birth and continues into adolescence. It is emphasized, particularly in Turkish studies, that a mother's functions include gathering family members and ensuring closeness, commitment, togetherness, and coalescence among family members (Gander & Gardiner, 2010; Tınaz, 1999). The balanced love and protection that mothers show to their children help children to develop feelings of confidence. Thus, children learn to love and communicate with people. A mother-child relationship based on warmth and love supports children's social competence, while a mother-child relationship based on conflict can increase children's negative behaviors. When mothers engage in healthy, non-threatening, cooperation-based communication with their children, the children become adaptable and creative individuals who think positively and can control themselves (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010; Santos, Peceguina, Daniel, Shin, & Vaughn, 2013). Mothers should be self-confident, sensitive to their children's problems, share their children's emotions and thoughts, and accepting. Mothers who tenaciously defend their own opinions, do not accept ideas and opinions that differ from their own, and disregard their children's opinions and thoughts cannot establish healthy relationships with their children (Avşaroğlu, 2014).

Supporting mothers with a well-designed education program enables them to determine and improve their parenting potential. Various early action programs have been developed in Turkey and in the world. The aim of these systematic and concept-based support programs is to inform parents, increase their awareness, and provide them with the wide variety of skills and attitudes to raise a child. Topics covered include health, nutrition, development, methods of helping children to acquire positive behaviors, effective communication, and parenting skills. Maintaining the mother educations to improve mothers' qualifications in line with their needs, to ensure that they have a social interaction and that they realize their importance in children's life, to increase their self-confidence and role in the education of children, to ensure that they put what they learn into practice, to help in the issues such as supporting their relationships with their children, or to guide, is important for the future of the society (Kılınç, 2011; Tezel Şahin & Kalburan, 2009).

Turkish studies (Akgün, 2008; Arabacı & Ömeroğlu, 2013; Driscoll & Pianta, 2006; Dereli, 2008; Durualp & Aral, 2010; Ekinci Vural, 2006; Eti, 2010; Evirgen, 2002; Gülay Ogelman, Önder, Seçer, & Erten, 2013; Kılıç, 2012; Kurt, 2007; Orçan ve Deniz, 2004; Tutkun, 2012; Uysal & Balkan, 2005) have shown that the number of studies on developing social skills in preschool period and examining the effect of social skills education programs has increased. However, no studies were found to analyze the effect and permanence of the Mother and Child Education Program by including mothers and their five- or six-year-old children to develop and improve mother and child relationship. The importance of mothers' participation for achieving the aims of preschool education is well-known. Mothers, who have an important place in preparing their children for life, have been the subject of many studies; however, these studies have typically focused on mother education programs. This highlights the importance of the Mother and Child Education Program in developing mother and child relationship. This study is important in terms of preparing a Mother and Child Education Program that will enhance the mother-child relationship and developing criteria for the future studies. The Mother and Child Education Program aims to improve the relationships between children and their mothers, and thereby improve children's future relationships, by providing services both for children and for their mothers. This study is also

important because it reveals the effectiveness of the Mother and Child Education Program, provides a guide for educators and researchers in future studies that include mothers and children sharing an education environment, sheds light on future studies, and contributes to the literature. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of the Mother and Child Education Program on the relationship between mothers and their five- or six-year-old children.

## 2. Method

This section includes explanations of the study model, study sample, data collection tools, education program, and data analysis.

### 2.1 Study Model

An experimental design of pretest-posttest-monitoring test with a control group was used to analyze the effect of the Mother and Child Education Program on the relationships between mothers and their five- or six-year old children. Among all scientific methods, experimental research is research that produces the most definite results. The researcher examines the effect of the comparable processes that she/he applies. Therefore, experimental research is expected to provide the researcher with the most definite results. In this study, the independent variable was participation in the Mother and Child Education Program and the dependent variable was the relationship between mothers and their five- or six-year-old children. The study design is shown symbolically in Table 1.

Table 1. Symbolic presentation of the model used in the study

Group	Pretest	Practice	Posttest	Monitoring Test
EG	M1	X	M2	M5
CG	M3	-	M4	-

EG: Experimental Group, CG: Control Group, M1-M2: Pretest and posttest measurements of the experimental group, M3-M4: Pretest and posttest measurements of the control group, M5: Monitoring test measurements of the experimental group, X: Mother and Child Education Program

### 2.2 The Study Sample

Written permission was obtained from independent preschools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education to determine the study sample. The school chosen for the study was selected from independent preschools using the simple random sampling method. The pretest was administered to the mothers of five- or six-year-old children in the selected preschool to determine the level of their relationships with their children. After the Kolmogorov Smirnov test showed that the groups were normally distributed, the experimental and control groups were determined. The experimental group consisted of the 25 children in the preschool's morning group, along with their mothers; the control group consisted of the 25 children in the preschool's afternoon group, along with their mothers. This prevented mothers and children from affecting one another. Mothers and children in the experimental group were provided with the Mother and Child Education Program. The children in the control group continued their daily education flow and nothing was administered to their mothers. It was ensured that the mothers in the study had not received any education before to improve mother and child relationships.

### 2.3 Data Collection Tools

The data were collected using the Child-Parent Relationship Scale developed by Pianta (1992) and adapted to Turkish language by Akgün and Yeşilyaprak (2010) along with the Mother and Child Education Program developed by the researcher.

#### 2.3.1 Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS)

The Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) was developed by Pianta (1992) and adapted to Turkish language by Akgün and Yeşilyaprak (2010). The scale was developed to understand the parent-child relationship. This 5-point Likert-type scale includes responses ranging from "totally not applicable" (1) to "totally applicable" (5). The negative statements in the scale are scored reversely. The Turkish version of the scale has two factors, and it includes two subscales: Conflict (14 items) and Positive Relationship (10 items), for a total of 24 items. A high score on the scale shows a negative child-parent relationship while a low score shows a positive relationship. The highest and lowest scores on the scale are 120 and 24, respectively.

Reliability is a measurement tool's ability to measure in such a way as to achieve the same results each time it is administered (Yılmaz & Sünbül, 2003). Two key criteria for the reliability of a measurement tool are "the consistency between the scores obtained at different times" and "the consistency between answers obtained at the same time" (Büyüköztürk, 2011). Internal consistency reliability, test-retest reliability, parallel forms (two semi-tests) reliability, and inter-observer consistency reliability are used to analyze the how well this scale meets these criteria (Çepni, 2007). The test-retest reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient, and two semi-test reliability were calculated using the data obtained from 234 mothers having children between the ages of four and six to determine the reliability of the Child-Parent Relationship Scale. Akgün and Yeşilyaprak (2010) carried out the reliability analysis for the CPRS. They found the Cronbach's alpha value to be 0.85 for the Conflict subscale, 0.73 for the Positive Relationship subscale, and 0.73 for the total score; the test-retest reliability coefficient to be 0.98 for the Conflict subscale, 0.96 for the Positive Relationship subscale, and 0.96 for the total score; and the two semi-tests reliability to be 0.84 for the Conflict subscale, 0.73 for the Positive Relationship subscale, and 0.72 for the total score. These values indicate a high level of reliability for the scale (Akgün & Yeşilyaprak, 2010; Büyüköztürk, 2011; Tavşancıl, 2006).

In this study, the Cronbach's alpha value was found to be 0.84 for the Conflict subscale, 0.78 for the Positive Relationship subscale, and 0.92 for the total score. A higher Chronbach's alpha reliability coefficient indicates a higher consistency between the scale items, which shows that the scale items had the same characteristics. The reliability coefficient should be as close to 1 as possible for a Likert-type scale in order to be deemed sufficient (Büyüköztürk, 2011). The analyses indicated that this scale has a high reliability for all its subscales.

### 2.3.2 Development of the Mother and Child Education Program

The researcher developed The Mother and Child Education Program to improve and support the relationships between mothers and their five- or six-year-old preschool. Parent education programs aim to systematically improve the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required for raising children, fostering positive family relationships, and fulfilling parental obligations within the family and society. The main objective of these programs is to guide mothers and improve their maternal skills and cultivate their children's physical, mental, social, and emotional development, particularly by strengthening their self-confidence. Some of the existing programs provide services for children, and the people in their immediate environment, and others provide services for both children and their parents (Sanders, Turner, & Markire-Dards, 2002). The Mother and Child Education Program aimed to provide services for both children and their mothers.

The content of the program was created following the need-determination works and was conveyed to each mother and child in the experimental group using the same methods and techniques. The program was prepared based on the Ecological Systems Theory and on a review of the existing literature on mother and child relationship. The program was influenced by an ecological approach that emphasizes the role of children's environment in their development. The ecological systems perspective has contributed to the involvement of family in early support programs. The program also included activities to improve and support mother-child relationships.

Seven specialists were consulted during the development of this program. They were asked to evaluate the appropriateness of the activities for mothers and children in regards to achieve the program objectives; the ability of the session contents to reflect the subject; and the clarity and comprehensibility of the instructions as "appropriate" "partially appropriate" or "not appropriate". The specialists were also asked to express their opinions in the explanations section. The program was altered based on feedback from the specialists, the materials were prepared, and the Mother and Child Education Program was finalized.

### 2.4 The Application Process

Permission was obtained from the Malatya Provincial Directorate for National Education in order to conduct the study and collect the data. The study was conducted based on the principle of respect for human dignity. The mothers were informed about the study. They were also assured that participation would be on a voluntary basis and that the collected data would only be used for this study based on the principle of confidentiality. Members of the experimental group participated in the program once a week for ten weeks, with each session lasting one hour. Each week, the researcher explained to the members of the experimental group the activities to be performed that week, modeled the activities himself, and gave the mothers and children an opportunity to practice. The mothers and children were then asked to repeat the activities throughout the week. All of the mothers in this study were administered the Child Parent Relationship Scale. The study data were obtained as a result of the pretest and posttest administered to the experimental and control group. The experimental group

also completed the monitoring test three weeks after the posttest to determine whether the education is permanent.

2.5 Data Analysis

The NCSS 2007 (Number Cruncher Statistical System-Kaysville, Utah, USA) was used for statistical analyses of the study data. The Independent Samples t-test was used to compare the normally distributed parameters of the two groups and the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the abnormally distributed parameters of the two groups. Descriptive statistical methods were also used. The Paired Samples t-test was used to make intragroup comparisons of the normally distributed parameters, and the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test was used to make intragroup comparisons of the abnormally distributed parameters. Significance was evaluated at the levels of  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$ .

3. Findings

This section uses tables to present findings obtained from this study, which aimed to analyze the effect of the Mother and Child Education Program on the relationship between mothers and their five- or six-year-old children.

Table 2. Comparison of pretest and posttest scores of the experimental and control groups on the child parent relationship scale and its subscales

		Experimental Group (n=25)	Control Group (n=25)	Test value	p
		Ave±SD	Ave±SD		
Positive Relationship	Pretest	37.84±7.85	39.84±7.82	Z: 0.001	<sup>b</sup> 1.000
	Posttest	36.72±4.97	42.64±4.65	t: 4.347	<sup>a</sup> 0.001**
	Test value; p	Z: -1.691; <sup>c</sup> p: 0.041	Z: -1.434; <sup>c</sup> p: 0.152		
	Gain Score	4.80±10.56	-1.12±4.01	Z: -2.062	<sup>b</sup> 0.039*
Conflict	Pretest	56.4±12.24	54.4±12.18	Z: 0.001	<sup>b</sup> 1.000
	Posttest	41.92±6.77	49.80±6.20	t: -4.293	<sup>a</sup> 0.001**
	Test value; p	Z: -3.364; <sup>c</sup> p: 0.001**	Z: -3.331; <sup>c</sup> p: 0.001**		
	Gain Score	-14.48±15.78	-6.60±6.93	Z: -2.660	<sup>b</sup> 0.008**
Total	Pretest	93.24±19.54	92.24±19.34	Z: 0.001	<sup>b</sup> 1.000
	Posttest	84.56±9.84	86.52±10.15	t: -0.693	<sup>a</sup> 0.004
	Test value; p	Z: -1.758; <sup>c</sup> p: 0.007	Z: -2.976; <sup>c</sup> p: 0.003**		
	Gain Score	-9.68±25.58	-7.72±10.40	Z: -1.504	<sup>b</sup> 0.132

<sup>a</sup> Independent Sample t-test <sup>b</sup> Mann-Whitney U Test <sup>c</sup> Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

\* $p < 0.05$  \*\* $p < 0.01$

Table 2 compares pretest and posttest scores obtained by the experimental and control groups on the Child-Parent Relationship Scale and its subscales. A high score on the scale indicates a negative relationship whereas a low score shows a positive relationship.

3.1 Evaluation of the Scores on the Positive Relationship Subscale of the Child Parent Relationship Scale

No statistically significant difference was found between the groups' pretest score averages on the Positive Relationship subscale ( $p = 1.000$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). However, the experimental group's average score on the Positive Relationship subscale was lower than that of the control group.

The experimental group's posttest score average on the Positive Relationship subscale was  $36.72 \pm 4.97$ , while that of the control group was  $42.64 \pm 4.65$ . The difference between the score averages of the experimental and control groups on the Positive Relationship subscale was statistically significant ( $p=0.001$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

The increase of  $4.80 \pm 10.56$  in the experimental group's average pretest score compared to the average posttest score on the Positive Relationship subscale was determined to be statistically significant ( $p=0.041$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). The decrease of  $1.12 \pm 4.01$  in the control group's average pretest score compared to the group's average posttest score on the Positive Relationship subscale was determined to be statistically insignificant ( $p=0.152$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

No statistically significant difference was found between the groups' average pretest and posttest scores on the Positive Relationship subscale ( $p=0.039$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

The experimental group's lower average posttest score might be explained by the effect of the Mother and Child Education Program on mothers and children in the experimental group on the aspect of positive relationship.

### *3.2 Evaluation of the Scores on the Conflict Subscale of the Child Parent Relationship Scale*

No statistically significant difference was found between the pretest score averages of the experimental and control groups on the Conflict subscale ( $p=1.000$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). However, the experimental group's average score on the Conflict subscale was higher than that of the control group.

The experimental group's average score posttest score on the on the Conflict subscale was  $41.92 \pm 6.77$ , while that of the control group was  $49.80 \pm 6.20$ . The difference between the score averages of the experimental and control groups on the Conflict subscale was statistically significant ( $p=0.001$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

The decrease of  $14.48 \pm 15.78$  in the experimental group's average pretest score compared to its average posttest score on the Conflict subscale was determined to be statistically significant ( $p=0.001$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). The decrease of  $6.60 \pm 6.93$  between the control group's average pretest and posttest score on the Positive Relationship subscale was determined to be statistically significant ( $p=0.001$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

No statistically significant difference was found between the changes in the groups' average pretest scores compared to their average posttest scores on the Conflict subscale ( $p=0.008$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

The experimental group's average posttest score, which was lower than the control group's average posttest score, might be explained by the effect of the Mother and Child Education Program provided to the mothers and children in the experimental group on the aspect of conflict.

### *3.3 Evaluation of the Total Scores on the Child Parent Scale*

No statistically significant difference was found between the groups' total average pretest scores ( $p=1.000$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). However, the experimental group's total average score was higher than that of the control group.

The experimental group's total posttest average score was  $84.56 \pm 9.84$ , while that of the control group was  $86.52 \pm 10.15$ . The difference between the total average scores of the experimental and control groups was statistically significant ( $p=0.004$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

The decrease of  $9.68 \pm 25.68$  in the experimental group's total average pretest score compared to its total average posttest score was determined to be statistically significant ( $p=0.007$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). The decrease of  $6.60 \pm 6.93$  in the control group's average pretest score compared to its average posttest score was determined to be statistically significant ( $p=0.003$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

There was no statistically significant difference between the changes in the total average pretest scores compared to the total average posttest scores ( $p=0.132$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

The experimental group's lower average posttest score compared to that of the control group may be explained by the effect of the Mother and Child Education Program, which was provided to the mothers and children in the experimental group.

Table 3. Comparison of the experimental group's posttest and monitoring scores on the child parent relationship scale and its subscales

	Experimental Group (n=25)			Test value	p
	Posttest	Monitoring Test	Posttest-Monitoring Test		
	Ave±SD	Ave±SD	Ave±SD		
<b>Positive Relationship</b>	42.64±4.65	37.20±4.55	-5.44±4.23	<i>t: 6.425</i>	<sup>d</sup> <i>0.001**</i>
<b>Conflict</b>	41.92±6.77	39.64±5.43	-2.28±3.15	<i>t: 3.612</i>	<sup>d</sup> <i>0.001**</i>
<b>Total</b>	84.56±9.84	76.84±8.63	-7.72±6.38	<i>t: 6.044</i>	<sup>d</sup> <i>0.001**</i>

<sup>d</sup> Paired Samples Test \*\*p<0,01

The decrease of 5.44±4.23 in the experimental group's average monitoring test score compared to the group's average posttest score on the Positive Relationship subscale of the Child Parent Relationship Scale was determined to be statistically significant (p=0.001; p<0.05).

The decrease of 2.28±3.15 in the experimental group's average monitoring test score compared to the group's average posttest score on the Conflict subscale of the Child Parent Relationship Scale was determined to be statistically significant (p=0.001; p<0.05).

The decrease of 7.72±6.38 in the experimental group's total average monitoring test score compared to their total posttest score average was determined to be statistically significant (p=0.001; p<0.05).

These findings suggest that the effect of the Mother and Child Education Program was permanent within the three-week period between the posttest and the monitoring test in terms of ensuring that the mothers in the experimental group established positive relationships with their children.

These findings also suggest that the duration of the Mother and Child Education Program was sufficient to enable the mothers to show permanent behavioral changes about having positive relationships with their children. The findings also suggest that mothers gave the required attention to the education program, interacted with their children at other times than daily routines, made effective use of the time they spent with their children, enjoyed interacting with their children, and were able to transfer the information and skills they learned during the program to their home, and all these factors might have played a role in this permanence.

#### 4. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to analyze the effect of the Mother and Child Education Program, which was prepared by the researcher, on the mother-child relationship between mothers and their five- or six-year-old children. The education program was found to support mother-child relationships. While no significant difference was found between the total average pretest scores of the experimental and control groups on the Child Parent Relationship Scale, a significant difference was found between their posttest score averages. A significant difference was also found between the pretest and posttest score averages in favor of the experimental group. While no significant difference was found between the average pretest scores of the experimental and control groups on the Positive Relationship subscale of the Child Parent Relationship Scale, a significant difference was found between their posttest score averages. A significant difference was also found between the pretest and posttest score averages in favor of the experimental group. While no significant difference was found between the average pretest scores of the experimental and control groups on the Conflict subscale of the Child Parent Relationship Scale, a significant difference was found between their posttest score averages. A significant difference was also found between the pretest and posttest score averages in favor of the experimental group. Further, a significant difference was found between the experimental group's average total posttest and monitoring test scores on the Child Parent Relationship Scale and between their average posttest and monitoring test scores on the Positive Relationship and Conflict subscales. The outcomes of the Mother and Child Education Program were found to be permanent.

The study findings suggest that the Mother and Child Education Program had a positive effect on the interactions between the mothers and their children. The mother-child relationships improved when mothers and children were given opportunities to interact with each other and when the mothers were supported and guided in this interaction. The difference between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group shows that the Mother and Child Education Program achieved its objective.

The Mother and Child Education Program was prepared as a game-based program to improve the relationships of mothers with their children. During the program, which included activities appropriate for the developmental characteristics of five- and six-year-old children, mothers were made to create an appropriate environment for children's developmental characteristics and support their relationships with their children. The increase in positive relationships between the mothers and their children after the education program may be attributed to the children's enjoyment of the mother and child relationship strengthened by the education program; mothers and children being mutually satisfied; mothers responding to children's needs in a correct and timely manner; mothers sharing a warm relationship with their children, and the mothers' capability of playing with their children. Early education programs support and organize mother-child relationships when they are applied regularly and at the appropriate times (Kelly & Bernard, 1999). The education programs for mothers usually aim to improve communication between mothers and children, increase mothers' positive relations with their children, and reduce negative interactions and conflicts (Akgün & Yeşilyaprak, 2010; Çağdaş, Arslan, Erbay, & Orçan, 2010; Li, Chan, Mak, & Lam, 2013; Simpkins et al., 2006; Thompson & Harm, 2000).

Parent Effectiveness Training (PET), one of the education programs commonly used throughout the world, and the School for Parents, a Turkish project, produced results that support the findings of this study. The Parent Effectiveness Training program was developed by Thomas Gordon in 1962 to improve parent-child relationships; it resulted in parents improving their children's academic performance, enriching their children's personal lives and establishing more positive family relationships (Alvy, 1994; Gordon, 2014). The results of the School for Parents project showed an increase in parents' positive attitudes and behaviors and a decrease in their negative behaviors toward their children. In addition, parents established healthy relationships with their children and gave their children opportunities to express their thoughts freely and be enterprising people (Alpaydın & Caner, 2011; Kartal, 2013; Temel, 2003).

The previous studies emphasize that education provided for mothers positively affects their relationships with their children. Simpkins et al. (2006) found, in their study on the relationship of the warm mother-child relationship and conflict with family education, that the education provided for the mothers made a significant difference in predicting positive relationships between the mothers and their children, but it did not make a difference in predicting conflict between mothers and their children. In their experimental study on the effect of the education program provided for the mothers in a preschool educational institution, Sevinç and Evirgen (2003) found a significant difference between the mother-child relationship of those who participated in the education program with their children and those who did not in favor of the experimental group. They observed that mothers in the experimental group established more positive relationships with their children, began to interact with them more frequently, listened to and spoke with them more frequently, read stories to them, played games with them, applied positive discipline methods, and perceived themselves to be more positive toward their children. Akgün (2008) applied the Training of Developing the Mother-Child Relationship with Game and analyzed its effect on the interactions between mothers and their four-, five-, or six-year-old children. They found a significant improvement in the relationship between mothers and children in the experimental group. Gülay Ogelman, Körükçü and Ersan (2015) encouraged the mothers to spend quality time one-on-one time with their five- or six-year-old children. Spending time together supported and positively affected the relationship between the mothers and children in the experimental group. Sidoz, Kunz, Eickhorst, and Cierpka (2013) conducted an experimental study in which they provided communication education to the mothers living in Germany. They found improvements in the social development of the mothers who received this education. Göktaş (2015) analyzed the effects of family participation and social skills education programs, both alone and together, on the relationships between mothers and their four- or five-year-old children. The study showed that the family participation program significantly affected relationships between mothers and their four- or five-year-old children. In their study on the effect of social problem solving skills education, Cartıllı and Bedel (2012) found that the education program was effective in improving the mothers' social problem solving skills and strengthening the relationships of their relationships with their children. Franz, Weihrauch, and Schafer (2011) aimed to increase mothers' positive relationships with their children, their emotional self-efficacy against their children, and their well-being by providing an education program for mothers of preschool children. They found that the children's problematic behaviors decreased, positive relationships between mothers and their children increased, and the program prevented the mothers from showing conflict behaviors. Bekman and Atmaca Koçak (2013) evaluated the effects of the Mother and Child Education Program in Turkey, Belgium, Switzerland, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia by examining the mothers' own experiences and statements and indicated that the program directly affected the mother-child relationship. The mothers in their study stated that they changed their behaviors toward their children, changed the communication methods they used with their



children, reduced their negative discipline methods, had more mutual interactions with their children, felt calmer and more patient, and became aware of the fact that their children are individuals.

Some points should be noted to improve mother-child relationships and obtain the desired results. Educators can develop new and different Mother and Child Education Projects in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education, universities, non-governmental organizations, and media, and they can also get involved in the dissemination of the mother and child education works performed in Turkey. Based on the finding that the Mother and Child Education Program positively affected mother-child relationships, the education program should be applied to mothers and children at different socio-cultural levels and to different study samples using the same methods and techniques so that the results can be evaluated. Education programs designed to improve mother-child relationships can be adapted for children in a lower age group, and these program can then be applied and tested for permanence. Finally, education program can be improved and applied for longer periods.

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