

**A COMPARATIVE RESEARCH ON PARENTS' THOUGHTS ON
REWARD AND PUNISHMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
(THE CASE OF TÜRKİYE AND NORTH MACEDONIA)**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to comparatively examine parents' views on reward and punishment used in early childhood education. Qualitative research, case design is used in the study. Some of the results determined according to the research findings are as follows: Reward and punishment is a method deemed necessary by most of the parents in child education. But participants in Turkey, northern Macedonia and awards participants than in child education method considers that the penalty should not be used too. It was determined that most of the participants who participated in the study used reward and punishment in children's education. It has been suggested that this method is effective in children's behavioral acquisition.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Reward, Punishment.

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INTRODUCTION

The early childhood years are considered to be the most critical period in an individual's life. In the first years of childhood, the fact that children's needs are regularly met by consistent adults, as well as being raised and accepted by their families in a loving environment greatly affect their development (Güven & Azkeskin, 2018). Therefore, providing a rich stimulus environment in the first childhood years, establishing a strong relationship between the family and the child, meeting the psychological needs (appreciation, love, respect, etc.) as well as physical needs are among the factors affecting the development of the child.

The period in which the development takes place at the highest level is the first years. The brain responds to experiences at an early age and this period is effective on brain development. Early childhood development programs increase children's mental development, skills, nutrition and social interaction at very young ages (Gulacti, 2014).

The education given during the preschool years, which is a critical period in which the foundations of personality are laid, affects the success of education at every level in the future and the whole life of the child. For this reason, the importance given to education increases much more in this period. Early childhood education institutions support children's social, mental, physical, emotional, psychomotor and language development. (Tufekci Akcan, 2018). These institutions, which prepare children for their primary school and future life, provide fully their functions by getting the support of their parents and even by educating them when necessary.

1. The Importance and The Necessity of Early Childhood Education

The importance given to education by a country reveals the level of development of that country. The dissemination of early childhood education services in all societies is considered among the objectives of social development (Erden et al., 2002).

The living experiences that take place in the early years of childhood are the key to success in school and in life. Recent studies have shown that the first three years of life are the most important years for cognitive development. Early learning is the most important factor that affects both cognitive and emotional development of children and

determines the success of children at school. (Bradley 1998; Barnett, 1995).

Principle 7 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child reads as follows: “The child should have the right to free and compulsory education at least at primary level.” Therefore, the cost of a child who is not well protected, who cannot be fed well, who cannot be provided with health care, whose family environment is not safe, and who cannot benefit from educational opportunities, is very high for the society. In order to improve maternal and child health, it is necessary to provide health services to families with the increase in education level and income level. The development of the society can be achieved with more production, export, modern technology and healthy and well-educated people (Yorukoglu, 2000).

Development and learning occur very rapidly during the childhood. The experiences gained in these periods form the basis of future years. Therefore, it may be too late to wait for the child to start primary school in order to support these areas, so that the developmental areas, most of which are completed in the first six years of life, do not cause irreparable delays in the following years (Ari et al., 2001). Early childhood education or pre-school education, which is the first step of education, covers the years from the birth of children to the day they start primary school. Early childhood education; is an educational process within the integrity of basic education, which provides rich stimulating environment opportunities for children in line with their individual characteristics, supports their development in every aspect (mental, emotional, social and physical) and prepares them for the primary education process.

2. REWARD AND PUNISHMENT IN EDUCATION

2.1. Reward

In order to prevent the disruption of education and to prevent the interruption of education, it is necessary to intervene in the negative student behaviors during the education process. It is of great importance that these interventions are made in a timely manner. Because the negative behavior exhibited after the reactions not given on time spreads and the number of those who see these behaviors increases.

In such a situation, it becomes difficult to stop negative behaviors. For this reason, the teacher should give reinforcement to the student who has positive behavior, and the student who has negative behavior should be punished that the child who commits the wrong behavior will accept. However, it is necessary to be very careful when punishing students. Because when a student's personality is damaged, it can be very difficult to reverse results.

It is defined as increasing the situation of showing or not showing the response shown to a certain stimulus. The stimulus used for reinforcement is called reinforcer. Reinforcement can be expressed as the reinforcement of a response by internal or external influences. In everyday language, positive reinforcements are called rewards. It is the state of adding a good stimulus to the current situation (Bacanlı, 1998).

2.2. Punishment

The method that causes sadness and pain to the child (beating, deprivation, etc.) or the right taken from the child is defined as punishment in order not to repeat any behavior. Punishment is applied when children behave in an undesirable manner. Punishment creates fear in children. Therefore, the child does not exhibit the behavior because he is afraid, not because he understands that he should not do that behavior. However, over time, punishment loses its effect like reward. Because the child who gets used to the punishment is not affected by this situation after a while and continues the behavior for which he was punished. Sometimes the child who lies to avoid punishment is encouraged to lie (Navaro, 2001).

Yavuzer defines punishment as a strict method applied to pull the child in the desired direction in order to eliminate the behavioral disorders seen in children. Punishment does not produce continuous and positive results. It is also observed that feelings such as grudge, revenge and anger increase in children after punishments (Yavuzer, 1995).

According to Erden (2005), the reactions that need to be done in order to prevent negative behaviors in the classroom environment are primarily non-verbal, verbal and changing the situation reactions. However, if the negative behaviors continue, it may be considered that the teacher will punish. If a penalty is to be applied, these penalties can be applied in four types. These are:

1. Scolding and Condemnation

2. Natural Results

3. Logical Results

4. Behavioral Punishments

Students should never be given physical and severe punishments.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Design

Qualitative research, case study design was used in this study, which aimed to comparatively examine parents' views on reward and punishment used in early childhood education. Yildirim and Simsek (2016) explain it as one of the perspectives that form the basis of qualitative research, based on facts that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding.

3.2. The Study Group

In this study, the Chain Sampling technique was used to determine the participants and the study group consisted of 39 parents from Türkiye and 34 parents from North Macedonia. Snowball or chain sampling technique is used when it is difficult to access the units that make up the universe or when information about the universe (size and depth of information, etc.) is missing.

This technique focuses on people and critical situations where rich data can be obtained and reaches the universe by following these people and critical situations (Creswell, 2013). A researcher who wants to make snowball sampling starts by asking the following questions to the people and situations that he thinks have the most information in the universe about the phenomenon he is interested in and examining: 'Who knows the most about this subject? Who should I start the conversation with?' (Flick, 2014). In this way, the researcher tries to gain new information by asking people who else they can meet. The important point here is that the researcher gains the trust of the interviewees (Grix, 2010). Because people may hesitate to give information to a person they do not trust and may not be a reference for meeting new people. The data collection phase of the research is completed as soon as data saturation is reached as a result of the research carried out by the researcher in a chained manner. In many

cases it is easy for the researcher to choose the first link of the snowball or chain.

Because it is easier to access people and situations that are visible in society than in the later stages of the snowball. In addition, these first and key people reached by the researcher are often seen as important by different people and groups (Bernard, 2011). Continuing on the path that the key person will open, the researcher will naturally differentiate the chain with new resources by reaching the recommended people.

3.3. Data collection tool

Interviewing is called a mutually interactive educational process based on a predetermined and purposeful question-answer style. The main purpose of the interview is to reveal the feelings, thoughts and opinions of the interviewee about the researched subject (Cepni 2009, Merriam 2009, Patton 2002).

Therefore, in the current study, semi-structured interview was used as a data collection tool (Bogdan and Biklen 2007). While preparing this form, foreign and domestic sources were scanned in detail and relevant items were determined. The following steps were followed while creating the interview form.

- For data collection purposes , an interview form was prepared, taking into account the sub-objectives of the research.
- The interview form consists of four items aiming at demographic information and nine items aiming to understand the participants' thoughts on reward and punishment method.
- The final form of the interview form was decided by making the necessary corrections and making these items read to the teachers in the grammar branch in terms of intelligibility and meaning.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data collected in this study were analyzed with the inductive content analysis method.

Inductive content analysis is to find out what the data obtained from the research actually mean by making coding in the research and to create the relationships between the findings.

This method of analysis is also known as 'theory building'. The codes (concepts) created and the relationships (themes) of these concepts are used to determine what the data actually means. The analysis of qualitative research begins with the coding of the collected data, then the themes are obtained by associating the codes with each other, the process continues with the appropriate arrangement of the obtained codes and themes, and ends with the determination of what the data means and the interpretation of the researcher (Yildirim & Simsek, 2006). In this study, the answers given by the participants to the interview questions were analyzed in depth comparatively in line with the purpose of the research, and the "Coding Key", which includes analytical evaluation options, was created. The coding phase here includes dividing the collected data into meaningful and necessary parts, scrutiny, making necessary comparisons, conceptualizing and interrelating the results (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Concept is the meaningful parts in the obtained data.

These meaningful parts can be a word, sentence or paragraph. Category (theme) is the collection of the codes obtained under a higher level title by associating them with each other. Themes are more abstract and include generalizations (Yildirim & Simsek, 2006).

In the analysis process, first of all, interview records were analyzed and comparisons were made on the basis of parents in Türkiye and parents in North Macedonia. The research findings were analyzed by the researcher on the basis of the interview questions, and the information obtained was analyzed, divided into meaningful sections suitable for the sub-problems and the sections that formed a meaningful whole in themselves were named. In order to be able to code the research in depth, the data were coded several times by the researcher. After the codes were written in the form of a list, the related ones were brought together and associated within the framework of the basic questions of the research. The codes were gathered under categories according to their common features and themes were created. The frequency of repetition of the concepts/sentences emphasized in the themes was calculated and tabulated.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Thoughts and/or opinions of Participants on the Concepts of Reward and Punishment in Child Education

The themes formed after the separation of codes and categories with the data collected from the participants are given in detail below. The problem of participants' opinions about the concepts of reward and punishment in child education has six themes. These themes are: 1. the response of a child's behavior, 2. two indispensable concepts in child education, 3. the education and lessons given to the child, 4. two concepts that should not be used in child education, 5. the purpose of both is discipline, 6. short-term solution path headings. As a result of the interviews with the participants, the views of the participants on the "concepts of reward and punishment in child education" are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Table 1. Distribution of the Working Group's Views on the Concepts of Reward and Punishment

Codes	Türkiye		North Macedonia	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Response for a child's behavior	14	39	19	56
Two essential concepts in child education	7	19	5	15
Education and lectures taught to the child	3	9	9	26
Two concepts that should not be used in child education	5	14	1	3
The purpose of both is discipline.	5	14	-	-
Short term solution	2	5	-	-
Total	36	100	34	100

As explained in Table 1, the majority of the participants in the study defined the concepts of reward and punishment as the response of a child's behavior. While some participants defined the concept of reward and punishment as two indispensable concepts in child education, some participants defined it as two concepts that should not be given in child education.

Participants from Turkey said that the concepts of reward and punishment are a short-term solution and the purpose of both concepts is discipline, but none of the participants in North Macedonia found these two concepts in this sense.

The response of a child's behavior (Interview record: T9).

It can add many things to the child, both teaching and learning (Interview record: KM32).

The purpose of both methods, which are used quite incorrectly today, is actually to provide discipline. Punishments are painful or aggressive attitudes towards a child in order to change the child's behavior. Rewards are similar to punishments. Once the reward system has been established, not giving a reward to the child is perceived as a punishment. (Interview record: T7).

In this problem of the research, the participants were asked their opinions about the requirements of reward and punishment in child education by means of an interview form, and their experiences were included. The problem of participants' views on reward and punishment requirements in child education has four themes. These themes are: 1. required, 2. not required, 3. sometimes required, 4. may be rewarded, punishment is not required.

4.2. Thoughts of Participants on Reward and Punishment Requirements in Child Education

In this problem of the research, the participants were asked their opinions about the requirements of reward and punishment in child education by means of an interview form, and their experiences were included. The problem of participants' views on reward and punishment requirements in child education has four themes. These themes are: 1. required, 2. not required, 3. sometimes required, 4. may be rewarded, punishment is not required. As a result of the interviews with the participants, the opinions of the participants about the "reward and punishment requirements in child education" are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of the Working Group's Opinions on Reward and Punishment Requirements in Child Education

Codes	Türkiye		North Macedonia	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Necessary	23	59	24	70
Not necessary	9	23	2	6
Sometimes necessary	2	5	6	18
May be rewarded, punishment not required	5	13	2	6
Total	39	100	34	100

As explained in Table 2, the majority of the participants in the study found reward and punishment necessary in child education. While some participants said that sometimes it is necessary, some participants said that the reward may be necessary, but the punishment is not. Participants in Türkiye do not find reward and punishment necessary in child education compared to participants in North Macedonia.

It is necessary because that way we encourage our child to do some work (Interview record: KM28).

It is not. Because it provides short-term motivation (Interview record: T11).

Yes, sometimes it's necessary because he's more enthusiastic when he gets a reward. Understands that he should not do it again when he is punished (Interview record: KM10).

In new approaches there is no place to Punishment. . The reward should not always be considered financially. No reward is given when the child fulfills his duties and responsibilities. Verbal (well done, congratulations) and symbolic (star, smiling face) awards can be given when he does not do the behaviors we do not want (Interview record: T5).

4.3. Participants' Thoughts on the Effect of Reward or Punishment on Child's Behavioral Acquisition

Through the interview form, the participants were asked their opinions about the effect of reward or punishment on the child's behavioral acquisition, and their experiences were included. Four thematic findings of the problem of the effect of reward or punishment on the child's behavioral acquisition are presented. These themes are: 1. has an effect on behavior acquisition, 2. has no effect on behavior acquisition, 3. reward yes, but punishment has no effect on behavior acquisition, 4. does not have a positive effect on behavior acquisition in the long run. As a result of the interviews with the participants, the opinions of the participants about the "effect of reward or punishment on the child's behavioral acquisition" are shown in table 3.

Table 3. The Working Group's Effects of Reward or Punishment on the Child's Behavioral Acquisition Distribution of Views on the Impact

Codes	Türkiye		North Macedonia	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Has an effect on behavioral acquisition	24	62	31	91
No effect on behavioral acquisition	10	26	2	6
Reward yes, but punishment has no effect on behavioral acquisition	4	10	1	3
No long-term positive effect on behavior acquisition	1	2	-	-
Total	39	100	34	100

As explained in Table 3, the majority of the participants in the research say that reward or punishment has an effect on the child's behavioral acquisition. Although some participants said that the reward or punishment has no effect, some participants stated that the reward, yes, the punishment has no effect on the education of children.

Although the participants from Turkey said that the reward or punishment would not have a positive effect on the child in the long run, none of the participants in North Macedonia supported this finding.

Definitely yes there is. When there is a reward, the child's self-confidence increases, and when he achieves something, he increases his self-confidence and wants to work harder and win reward. Punishment creates ambition and helps him to become more ambitious and develop himself by living the punishment for losing the reward. (Interview record: KM11).

No, it has no effect (Interview record: T39).

There is a reward, I believe that punishment creates trauma (Interview: T14).

It does not have a long-term positive effect on behavioral acquisition (Interview record: T7).

4.4. Thoughts of the Participants on the Use of Rewards and Punishments in Child Education and Their Applications

In this problem of the research, the participants were asked their opinions about the use of reward and punishment in child education and their suggestions about their applications, and their experiences were included by means of an interview form. The problem of suggestions for the use and applications of reward and punishment in child education has three themes. These themes were examined under the headings: 1. While applying rewards and punishments, attention should be paid to the dose, 2. It should be understood by talking to children, 3. Rewards and punishments should not be applied. As a result of the interviews with the participants, the opinions of the participants about the "recommendations for the use and applications of reward and punishment in children's education" are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Thoughts of the Working Group on the Use and Practices of Rewards and Punishments in Child Education

Codes	Türkiye		North Macedonia	
	f	%	f	%
While applying rewards and punishments, attention should be paid to the dose.	19	51	23	64
To be understood by talking to children	11	30	10	28
No rewards or punishments	7	19	3	8
Total	37	100	36	100

As seen in Table 4, the majority of the suggestions of the participants regarding the use and practices of reward and punishment stated that the dose should be paid attention to when applying rewards and punishments. Although some participants suggested that their suggestions were to talk to children, some participants suggested that rewards and punishments should not be applied in children's education.

It is necessary to use everything in the right amount and balance it by using both the amount of reward and punishment, and all parents should try to understand their children (Interview record: KM34).

By giving her your love and expressing it, teaching her the truth will make her feel valued.

In this way, the child who has the thought and feeling of "I am valuable" will be able to distinguish right from wrong in a shorter time with the sense of self-confidence she gains (Interview record: T7).

I do not approve of either (Interview record: T21).

CONCLUSION

In this section, the findings obtained in the research and the results of the research obtained through the literature review were compared. The findings for each of the main problem and sub-problems of the research were briefly stated and their similarities or differences with the studies on the related subject were revealed.

Parents who participated in the study from Türkiye consisted of 28 female and 11 male individuals. The majority of the study included parents who were women. 2 of the parents are between 26-30 years old, 5 of them are between 31-35 years old, 3 of them are between 36-40 years old, 5 of them are between 41-45 years old, 24 of them are 46 years old and over. Status of Education of the participants: 2 of them are primary school graduates, 2 of them are secondary school graduates, 12 of them are high school graduates, 20 of them are undergraduate graduates and 3 of them have postgraduate education. The income status of the participants is between 2500 TL and below, 8 of them between 2501-3000 TL, 2 of them between 3001-3500 TL and 21 of them between 3501-4000 TL.

The parents participating in the research from North Macedonia consisted of 20 female and 14 male individuals. 4 of the parents are 25 years old and under, 2 are 26-30 years old, 10 are 31-35 years old, 6 are 36-40 years old, 6 are 41-45 years old, 6 are 46 age and above. Status of Education of the participants: 1 primary school graduate, 7 secondary school graduate, 2 high school graduate, 13 undergraduate graduate and 11 graduate education. The income status of the participants is between 2500 TL and below, 14 of them between 2501-3000 TL, 7 of them between 3001-3500 TL and 7 of them between 3501-4000 TL.

Most of the participants who participated in the research defined the concepts of reward and punishment as the response of a child's behavior. While some participants defined the concept of reward and punishment as two indispensable concepts in child education, some participants defined it as two concepts that should not be given in child education. Participants from Turkey said that the concepts of reward and punishment are a short-term solution and the purpose of both concepts is discipline, but none of the participants in North Macedonia found these two concepts in this sense. As a result of this study, which was conducted to determine the place of reward and punishment, which is widely applied in the education system, it was seen that there are important limitations of both reward and punishment practices (Deci et al., 2001: 1; Brandt, 1995: 13; LTC, 2009: 2; Swanson, 2001). : 46; Hall, 2009: 49; Gordon, 2000: 4; Ozyurek, 1998: 98-99).

The majority of the participants found reward and punishment necessary in child education. While some participants said that sometimes it is necessary, some participants said that the reward may be necessary, but the punishment is not. Participants in Türkiye do not find reward and punishment necessary in child education compared to participants in North Macedonia.

The majority of the participants say that reward or punishment has an effect on the child's behavioral acquisition. Although some participants said that the reward or punishment has no effect, some participants stated that the reward, yes, the punishment has no effect on the education of children. Although the participants from Türkiye said that the reward or punishment would not have a positive effect on the child in the long run, none of the participants in North Macedonia supported this finding. Freud (one of the founders of contemporary psychology) states that the most important years for individuals are the early years of childhood. Because children's cognitive skills, self-perceptions, interaction with those around them and their attitudes towards the world shape their personality. The personality traits determined in this period form the basis for the following years and do not change easily.

The majority of the participants use reward and punishment in child education. Although some participants sometimes use reward and punishment, some participants do not use punishment. Participants in Türkiye prefer reward and punishment less in child education than participants in North Macedonia.

The majority of the participants stated that punishment practices in children's education will cause permanent behavioral disorders in children. Although some participants said that they did not have any disadvantages, some participants said that children's attitudes and attitudes towards their parents would change. According to Dokmen (2005), punishment can create school phobia. Besides, complex behaviors, critical thinking, positive outlook on life, human love or mathematics cannot be taught with punishment. Punishment can create fear, regress, not improve. That is why punishment is powerless.

The majority of the participants' suggestions for the use and practices of reward and punishment stated that the dose should be paid attention to when applying rewards and punishments. Although some

participants suggested that their suggestions were to talk to children, some participants suggested that rewards and punishments should not be applied in children's education. Saritas (2003) points out that rewarding undeserving students can be perceived as a punishment by those who truly deserve it.

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