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Self-Regulation Skills of Children within the Context of the Meanings that Mothers Attribute to the Concept of Child

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the meanings that mothers attribute to the concept of child and examine the self-regulation skill levels of their children within the context of the meaning attributed to the child. The research was carried out with a mixed method design entitled “Completely Mixed Sequential Equal Status Design”. The study group of the research, which was determined by using the maximum variation sampling method, was composed of 297 mothers with 60-72 months-old children studying in private and public kindergartens in Efeler District of Aydın province in the 2020-2021 academic year. As the data collection tools in the study, Self-regulation Skills Scale for the Children Aged Between 4-6 (Mother Form) and structured interview questions were used. The qualitative data on the meaning that parents attributed to the concept of child were analyzed by using descriptive analysis. The quantitative data on the self-regulation skills of their children and the analysis of these variables within the context of the meanings attributed to the concept of child were performed by using SPSS 21 package program. As a result of the research, it was determined that the children were interpreted as investment tool, development, property, individual with rights, and innocent, respectively; and it was also revealed that little adult, sinner, God-given, and reflective categories present in the literature were not among the meanings attributed to children. When the self-regulation skills of children within the context of the meaning attributed to the child were examined, it was found out that the self-regulation skills of the children who were only interpreted as investment tool were high, and those of the children who were interpreted as development, property, individual and innocent were at a moderate level.

Keywords: Parent, Concept of Child, Self-Regulation, Mixed-Method

1. Introduction

The pre-school period is the period in which the development of the brain is the fastest, thus forming a strong basis for the cognitive, social, emotional, motor, and language development of the child (MEB (Ministry of National Education), 2013). Bloom (as cited in Senemoğlu, 2001) also stated that the pre-school period is a process of great importance, in which approximately 80% of the mental development of children is completed. There are developmental tasks to be fulfilled by children in the pre-school period. Among these developmental tasks, there are such tasks as being in harmony with society, establishing a balance between society and their own needs and desires, and improving academic skills. One of the most significant skills in the implementation of these

development tasks is self-regulation skills (Tekin, 2018). Children begin to use various mental strategies to control their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in achieving the goals they have set for themselves, and this skill is the self-regulation skill, which is defined as the highest level skill to be acquired in this period (Bayındır, 2016).

Self-regulation skill is composed of sub-dimensions that are separate from each other but intertwined within in terms of development and work (Fındık Tanrıbuyurdu & Güler Yıldız, 2014). There are different designations regarding the sub-dimensions of self-regulation. For example, McClelland et al. (2007) stated that the sub-dimensions of self-regulation are behavior regulation and social skills. Smith Donald et al. (2007) determined the sub-dimensions of self-regulation as attention, behavior, and emotion regulation; whereas Erol and İvrendi (2018) examined the self-regulation skills in the scale they developed in order to evaluate self-regulation skills in accordance with the views of parents from a cognitive perspective, and in forming the conceptual basis of the scale, they used working memory, attention and prohibitive control components of the driving functions that contribute to self-regulation skills (McClelland & Cameron, 2012).

Driving function, which is stated to contribute to self-regulation skills, consists of cognitive skills that enable us to consciously control reactions, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, which can therefore be defined as a critical piece for self-regulation skills (Mischel, 2016). Among driving functions, attention component, the importance of which is emphasized for self-regulation skills, is defined as the ability to regulate, coordinate, maintain attention for a certain goal, ignore irrelevant stimuli or distracting elements, and monitor attention alone (Ruff & Rothbart, as cited in Harris et al., 2007). Working memory, which is another component associated with self-regulation skills, is the ability to store and process information for a short period of time (Klingberg et al., 2002). Prohibitive control, which is defined as the third component, is described as preventing impulsive reactions and performing/distributing an opposite action (Carlson & Wang, 2007).

The development of self-regulation skills starts from birth and has great importance in increasing the quality of life in the individual in terms of school, work, and social life (Sezgin & Demiriz, 2016). Being an individual having the skills of delaying/suppressing their wishes, feelings and behaviors, and managing their attention and emotions throughout life (Aydın & Ulutaş, 2017), in short, being an individual with self-regulation skills is associated with such important points in the individual's life as being more competent in terms of social and cognitive aspects, and having higher academic competence in examinations in adolescence (Mischel et al., 1989); having low body mass index, high self-confidence, and being successful in coping with stress in adulthood; experiencing decreased addiction and obesity probability in middle age (Mischel, 2016). Children with advanced behavior regulation skills are more advantageous in terms of adapting to school rules and finding the opportunity to learn (Sezgin & Demiriz, 2016); and those who are able to control impulse, attention, and emotion are also more advantageous in terms of adapting to school and fulfilling their responsibilities when starting primary school (Tekin, 2018). Having developed self-regulation skills is of great importance for academic skills involving the child's motivation for learning, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Whitebread et al., 2009). Despite the fact that the above-mentioned benefits of self-regulation for the child seem to be shaped within the framework of academic skills or expectations for the child at first glance, they actually bring along the skills that are not only important for childhood but also for life. Among these, the situations such as fulfilling the responsibilities and adapting to school or rules should not be understood as a situation limited to school because children with advanced regulation skills towards school, rules, or responsibilities will be able to find solutions to an unusual problem they will face in the future by maintaining the same skills and motivate themselves according to what they are able to do. Thus, they will be individuals who can easily live within society. For this reason, it is thought that having self-regulation skills is such a skill that parents and even society would like their children to have. While it is pleasing that this desired skill is a skill that can be learned and developed by using certain strategies (Mischel, 2016), it also brings certain responsibilities to parents, educators and all people who touch the child's life.

For self-regulation skills, the first years of life are of great importance as they form the basis of the skill and ensure that it is permanent (Tuzcuoğlu et al., 2019). As mentioned before, it is crucial to support this skill, which is extremely significant in terms of learning, development, and participation in life, at an early age (Fındık Tanrıbuyurdu & Güler Yıldız, 2014), and parents play an important role in terms of self-regulation skills, just as they do in every aspect of the child's development (Bayındır, 2016). It is also supported by many theories and theorists that the parent has great importance and influence on the development of the child; Bronfenbrenner

(1986), who emphasizes the importance of parental characteristics on the child by including the family in direct interaction with the child in the first ring of his Ecological Systems Model, can be pointed as one of the prominent examples. Social Cognitive Theory also states that self-regulation develops by being indigenized within the social environment and over time (Zimmerman, 1989).

The pre-school period is the period when the brain is most vulnerable to the effects of the environment due to the rapid development of the brain, and the environment deeply affects the development of the child. Especially in the first years of life, the most influential factor regarding the child's environment is the family (MEB, 2013), and the attitudes of parents completely affect the child's personality development (Senemoğlu, 2010). The important effects of parents on the development of the child continue to be influential in terms of the development of self-regulation skills. Considering the fact that even the variables that are relatively less directly related to the child such as the age (Eke, 2017; Sezgin & Demiriz, 2016), educational status (Doğruyol et al., 2018; Ertürk Kara & Gönen, 2015; Sezgin & Demiriz, 2016; Tekin, 2018) or work status (Eke, 2017; Sezgin & Demiriz, 2016) of the parent are associated with the child's self-regulation skills, it is thought that the meaning that parents attribute to the concept of child, which is thought to affect the parent's behavior towards the child, will be associated with the child's self-regulation skills.

Although there are different definitions of child and childhood, the common point of all is that childhood is a concept that develops by being influenced by the cultural and historical aspects of society (Akbaş & Atasü Topçuoğlu, 2009; Erdiller Yatmaz et al., 2018). Childhood is not universal (Demir Gürdal, 2013), on the contrary, it is a concept that can differentiate in the society it is in, even in different regions of the same society, and contains cultural values by being influenced by various elements of that region. The meaning of the concept of childhood facilitates the comprehension of society (Eraslan, 2019; Tan, 1989). The definition of Toran (2012) regarding the historical development of the concept of childhood and the perceptions of children within societies stating that the concept refers to a little adult, a sinner child, a property child, a child as an investment tool, and a child who is an individual with their own rights, shows that the meanings attributed to the concept of child by society and individuals who are a part of the society are intertwined with the development of the concept of childhood.

The fact that parents have legal and economic control over their children is a phenomenon that exists in every society in every period of time. However, this power varies according to the period (Tan, 1989). Thanks to the changing perceptions and steps taken regarding the child and childhood, it can be seen that the child is put in the center and respected as an individual in the 21st century (Sağlam & Aral, 2016), while the understanding in terms of children in the early ages was absolute authority. Considering the history of the approaches towards children; it can be noted that in pre-Islamic Turkish societies, for instance, the child was given special importance and even those who did not have children were despised, child education especially for boys was given great importance, and the father did not have endless rights over the child regarding the right of custody (Aksoy, 2011; Arı & Karateke, 2010). When it comes to the Middle Ages; it can be seen that the special importance given to children in Turkish society continued, children were regarded as innocent beings who needed to be protected and educated (Özdemir, 2002; Sağlam, 2002), and in the 10th century, there were intellectuals who put forward important ideas pointing to the current approach to the education of children and children's rights (Durakoğlu, 2014; İnan, 1983; Koçyiğit et al., 2007; Sağlam & Aral, 2016, as cited in Yavuzer). In the same period, in the Middle Ages Europe, it is observed that the child began to be discovered in the 13th century and developed in the 16th – 17th centuries, that there was no childhood as a reflection of an understanding that did not discriminate the child from the adult until these dates, and therefore there was no idea that children were innocent beings who needed to be guarded and educated in the mentioned period (Aries, 1962; Taşkın, 2006). This understanding, which is called modern childhood in the West, covered only middle and upper-class boys, instead of covering all children despite the awakenings experienced in the period, and became a concept that included both class and gender discrimination (Aries, 1962; Demir Gürdal, 2013, as cited in Gittins). The establishment of modern Western childhood as the universal ideal; the definition of children as beings who are not yet grown up but develop with their deficiencies compared to adults, and as happy beings going to school and being in the ideal middle class has been broken with the realization that children who are exposed to such conditions as hunger, poverty, war, and economic abuse do not have an ideal childhood, especially in underdeveloped countries (Demir Gürdal, 2013). The awareness experienced brought with it an understanding in which the identity and personality of the child came to the forefront in the 18th and 19th centuries, which led to the emergence of new ideas and an increase in studies on

children in that period (Sağlam & Aral, 2016). Known for her important works and approach towards children, Montessori, who has an important position in terms of the development of the child, made a striking comparison of the perception of the child in the parents of the period and stated that even when compared to a slave, the child is in a worse situation in terms of facing barriers, being considered as a property, and ignoring their rights (Sağlam & Aral, 2016).

The state of awareness in terms of the difficulties faced by the child affected the meaning attributed to the child and enabled the child to be redefined. Studies on scientific and human rights have changed all concepts and definitions regarding the child, which paved the way for taking steps for the child (Gander & Gardiner, as cited in Sağlam & Aral, 2016). The New Childhood Sociology, which is the sociological approach to the child and childhood today, indicates different childhood constructions and emphasizes the fact that children are a heterogeneous group with different characteristics, and exhibits that childhood is open to so much diversity that it cannot be limited ideally. When the New Childhood Sociology is examined, it can be seen that there are such ideas advocating that childhood is not universally uniform, on the contrary, its historical and social character is determined by its differences, that childhood cannot be determined only from a biological point of view emphasizing development, and that children may differ from adults in such matters as attention and needs but are also social actors within society (Demir Gürdal, 2013). Parallel to this situation, children in the 21st century are defined as the co-constructors of knowledge, identity, and culture, and as the individuals who represent a certain group of society and have their own rights since they are fully participating members of the society just as adults (Dahlberg et al., as cited in Erdiller Yatmaz et al., 2018). The social and economic changes experienced in Turkey over time, just as all over the world, paved the way for the change in the Turkish family structure (Bayer, 2013) and caused the immediate family model to replace the traditional family model (GDFCS (General Directorate of Family and Community Services), 2011). The differentiation of the society's family structure brings about the change in the perceptions and roles of parents and children (GDFSR (General Directorate of Family and Social Research), 2014). In the traditional family structure, where the immediate family structure has begun to take its place, the child is assessed based on the contribution to the labor or economic power of the family, and therefore it is desired to have more of them (Kağıtçıbaşı, as cited in Yurtsever Kılıçgün, 2015). In the immediate family structure, expectations regarding the contribution of the child to the family have been decreased, and the individual achievements of the child are emphasized (Sunar & Fişek, 2005). In summary, in the immediate family structure, it is emphasized that the child can be an individual who can stand on their own feet rather than their contribution to the family (Kağıtçıbaşı et al., 2001; Sunar, 2002). The change in today's family structure has led to a differentiation of the meaning attributed to the child, besides the reshaping of parental roles; and as a natural consequence of this fact, the place of the child within the family, the responsibility they take, the value they are attached, and the care they receive in the family have also changed. The fact that children are considered as individuals who need to stand on their own feet instead of beings in need of protection by adults has brought the existence of their rights in the family to an important point (Yurtsever Kılıçgün, 2015). Parents have begun to share their children's care needs with day-care centers, and this has led to a change in mothers' perceptions regarding parenting and enabled children to gain such competencies as individuality, emotional control, adequate self-perception, and early maturation (Dencik, 1989). At this point, the meaning attributed to the concept of child and the self-regulation skills required for children to "become individuals that are able to stand on their own feet" are thought to be associated with each other. Accordingly, it is considered that within the scope of the study, a step will be taken to fill the gap in the literature by examining children's self-regulation skills within the context of the meaning attributed to the concept of child, and the current study will be a guide for researchers who will carry out further studies in which these variables will be included.

This study aimed to determine the meanings that mothers attribute to the concept of child and examine the self-regulation skill levels of their children within the context of the meaning attributed to the child. In order to achieve this aim, the following sub-purposes were determined:

1. What meaning do mothers who have children in the pre-school period attribute to the concept of child?
2. What are the self-regulation skill levels of their children according to the views of mothers who have children in the pre-school period within the context of the meaning they attribute to the child?

2. Method

2.1. *Research Model*

In the study, the qualitative data obtained for the meaning that mothers attributed to the concept of child and the quantitative data on the self-regulation skills of children obtained in line with the views of the mothers were used. For this reason, the method of the study was designed as a mixed method in which quantitative and qualitative methods are used together. Mixed methods research is an approach in which both quantitative and qualitative data/techniques are combined in a single study or in a series of closely related studies (Christensen et al., 2015). Furthermore, according to the statement of Christensen et al. (2015), for a research to be called a mixed method, it is required to combine the qualitative and quantitative findings at any stage of the study. Many types of designs to be used are suggested in mixed method research. These designs, which are approached in different ways by different researchers, are in such a structure that cannot be fully limited due to their probability to be transformed into different forms and that can be altered and organized according to needs (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2020). The mixed method design, which was thought to be the most appropriate design to be used within the scope of this research, was determined as “Completely Mixed Sequential Equal Status Design”, which is one of the typologies suggested by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009). The mixed method designs suggested by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) are determined by taking three dimensions into consideration during the design process. These dimensions are determined based on these dimensions: (a) determining to what extent (partially or fully) the mixed structure is mixed, (b) timing the data collection/data analysis process (simultaneous or sequential), and (c) emphasizing the approaches in the study (equal or dominant status). “Completely Mixed Sequential Equal Status Design” is a design in which quantitative and qualitative data are brought together in one or more stages of the research process (completely mixed), qualitative and quantitative stages are conducted in a certain order (sequential), and qualitative and quantitative stages are given equal focus/importance (equal status) (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). Due to the fact that the qualitative and quantitative data obtained within the scope of this study were brought together (completely mixed), that the qualitative stage of the study was required to be analyzed first (sequential), and that both qualitative and quantitative stages had equal importance (equal status), “Completely Mixed Sequential Equal Status Design” was used in the study.

2.2. *Population and Sample*

The population of the research was composed of the mothers of the children who continued their education in the private and public kindergartens of Aydın Province in the 2020-2021 academic year. The sample of the research was composed of those who had children (60-72 months old) studying in the private and public kindergartens of Efeler district in Aydın province in the 2020-2021 academic year; a total of 297 mothers who differed from each other in terms of socioeconomic level and educational status. In the study, great attention was also paid to the fact that the participants were mothers, and their children were in the age group of 60-72 months. The reason why the participation was restricted to mothers only was that one of the scales used in the study was the mother form, and the reason for limiting children’s age was to ensure that the situations regarding children’s self-regulation skills could be observed more explicitly. In the study, maximum variation sampling method was used so as to differentiate the socioeconomic level and educational status of the mothers from whom the data of the study were obtained. Maximum variation sampling is one of the purposeful sampling methods, and the main purpose of using this method is to reveal the common and divergent aspects of different situations determined in a manner consistent with research purposes, and thus providing a more comprehensive description of the problem (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018). Accordingly, it was aimed to reach the whole population in order to achieve maximum variation. To be able to determine the sample of the research, first of all, Aydın Provincial Directorate of National Education was contacted, and in line with the data obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education Statistics Office, private and public kindergartens of Efeler district, in which 60-72 months old children attended, were reached via phone call. By sharing the permissions obtained from the Ministry of National Education and Educational Research Ethics Committee with the administrators of the institutions contacted, it was ensured to reach the mothers of the children who continued their education in each institution. The link prepared via Google Forms was sent to the mothers of 3217 children in Efeler district through schools and teachers in order to include them in the research, but 368 forms were returned. Also, the data sets that did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded from the study. Accordingly, the forms of the participants whose children’s birth dates did not comply with the process or who responded to the same data set more than once were not included in the research.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

Within the scope of the research, the data including various personal information of the mothers and their children, the meanings that the mothers attributed to the concept of child, and their views regarding their children's self-regulation skills were collected. For this reason, Personal Information Form, Self-regulation Skills Scale for the Children Aged Between 4-6 (Mother Form) (Erol & İvrendi, 2018), and the interview questions compiled by utilizing the interview protocol of the studies on child perception (Erdiller Yatmaz et al., 2018, 2019) and finalized by adding new questions were included in the data collection tools section. After obtaining the permissions of Aydın Provincial Directorate of National Education and the Educational Research Ethics Committee, as well as the permissions for the use of the scales used within the scope of the research, and finalizing the structured interview questions, they were transferred to the digital environment in order to be collected via Google Forms links.

2.4. Personal Information Form

In the research, the personal information form created to be able to obtain various information about the participants and their children (excluding the distinguishing questions) was composed of a total of seven questions; gender of the child, number of siblings, birth order, duration of pre-school education; maternal age, education level, and family income.

2.4.1. Self-regulation Skills Scale for the Children Aged Between 4-6 (Mother Form)

Self-regulation Skills Scale for the Children Aged Between 4-6 (Mother Form), which aims to determine the self-regulation skills of children aged between 4-6 years in line with the views of mothers, was developed by Erol and İvrendi (2018) and composed of 20 items. The scale is a five-point Likert-type scale and is scored as "Always" (5), "Mostly" (4), "Sometimes" (3), "Rarely" (2), and "Never" (1). The scores that can be obtained from the scale are evaluated between 100 (the highest) and 20 (the lowest), and it can be interpreted that as the score increases, the child's self-regulation skills get better. In the scale, in which the child's self-regulation skills are evaluated on the basis of four factors in line with the views of the mother, the names of the factors were determined as working memory, attention, prohibitive control-behavior, and prohibitive control-emotion (Erol & İvrendi, 2018). The attention factor includes six items and explains 36.21% of the total variance. The working memory factor includes five items and explains 9.48% of the total variance. The prohibitive control-emotion factor includes five items and explains 8.96% of the total variance. The prohibitive control-behavior factor includes 4 items and explains 6.47% of the total variance. When the whole scale is examined, it is determined that it explains 61% of the total variance. As a result of the analysis on the reliability of the scale, it is revealed that the internal consistency coefficient of the whole scale is .90, whereas the coefficients of its sub-dimensions vary between .75 and .89, and the test-retest reliability coefficient is .77 (Erol & İvrendi, 2018). The fact that the reliability coefficient is between .70 and .99 indicates that the reliability of the scale is high (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018). Considering the fact that the reliability coefficients of the whole scale and its sub-dimensions are .75 and above, it can be said that Self-Regulation Skills Scale for the Children Aged Between 4-6 is a reliable scale with its four sub-dimensions.

2.4.2. Interview Questions for the Meanings That Parents Attributed to the Concept of Child

At the phase of determining the interview questions, the studies of the researchers working on child perception were examined first; and it was determined to use the compilation of the questions in the study by Erdiller Yatmaz et al. (2018, 2019) and add new questions related to the research topic. Accordingly, all the scholars included in the studies by Erdiller Yatmaz et al. (2018, 2019) were contacted via e-mail for the use of the questions they developed within the scope of their studies, and their approvals were obtained for the permissions to use the interview questions. Various questions were compiled in parallel with the interview protocol obtained in line with the approval of the authors, and the first version of the interview questions to be used within the scope of the study was formed as nine questions: "In your opinion, who is a 'child'?", "If you were to describe 'child' with three words, what would these three words be?", "What is the first characteristic that comes to your mind when I say 'child'?", "Are there any differences that distinguish the child from the adult?", "What can/should the child do and what cannot/shouldn't?", "Who decides/should decide this and according to what?", "How would you describe

your own childhood?”, “Is there a difference between your own childhood and your current perception of ‘child’? (If so, what are these differences?)”, and “What could be the factors that lead to your current perception of ‘child’?”.

2.5. Data Collection

Before the data collection process of the research, the permissions of the owners of the scale for the use of the scale and then the permissions of the Directorate of National Education and the Educational Research Ethics Committee were obtained, and the schools were contacted via phone in order to deliver the data collection tools organized as Google Forms link to the participants. Each data collection tool described above was brought together to be presented in separate sections but under a single link and sent to the participants with their explanations.

2.6. Data Analysis

In the study, the qualitative data obtained from the interviews about the meaning that the parents attributed to the concept of child were examined through descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis is a type of analysis in which the data obtained are summarized and interpreted according to previously determined themes, and the descriptions are enriched by using direct quotations from the views of the participants from time to time (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The classification of the qualitative data to be obtained within the scope of the research was made on the basis of the categories present in the literature, which include the perception of child in history/societies. The quantitative data on views of the mothers regarding the self-regulation skills of their children and the analysis of these variables within the context of the meaning attributed to the concept of child were performed by using SPSS 21 package program.

3. Findings

3.1. Findings Regarding the Meanings That the Mothers Attributed to the Concept of Child

The first sub-problem in the research was determined as “What meaning do mothers who have children in the pre-school period attribute to the concept of child?”. The meanings that the mothers attributed to their children within the scope of this sub-problem are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The meaning that the participants attributed to the concept of child

The Meaning Attributed to Child	Number of People	Percentage
Investment Tool	136	% 45,8
Development	55	% 18,5
Property	41	% 13,8
Individual with Rights	33	% 11,1
Innocent	32	% 10,8
Total	297	% 100

As can be seen in Table 1, the definitions of the participants regarding the concept of child were collected under five categories. According to the literature, the categories were determined as little adult, sinner, property, investment tool, individual with rights, innocent, God-given, reflective, and development: However, during the analysis of the qualitative data, no statements were found regarding the categories of little adult, sinner, God-given, and reflective in the data sets obtained within the scope of the study. This situation is interpreted in the light of the relevant researches in the conclusion and discussion section of this research. The meanings attributed by the participants to the concept of child were investment tool (45.8%), development (18.5%), property (13.8%), individual with rights (11.1%), and innocent (10.8%), respectively. The category that ranked first in terms of the frequency of the meaning attributed to child by the participants was investment tool category, which involved 136 people.

It can also be noticed that the participants interpreted the concept of child as “investment tool” in the first place (45.8%) according to frequency. When the responses of the mothers in investment tool category were analyzed on the basis of sub-categories, it was determined that they interpreted the child as an investment for the future and a unifying factor for the family, initially as the psychological benefit that the child provided to the parent; whereas it was also determined that no statements were found in the data sets representing the economic contribution of the child to the family. “Psychological benefit” sub-category includes the child’s statements of positive moods for their parents, whereas “future” sub-category refers to the views regarding the child as the continuation of the family or the future of the country, “family uniting element” sub-category includes the ideas of seeing the child as an element that holds the parents together and makes the family a real family. While defining the child, the statements such as “It is the guarantee of our future.” (Mother88) and “Fruit” (Mother42) can be given as examples of interpreting the child as an investment for the future. The statements like “child is the basis of the family.” (Mother20) and “making a family, making it a home” (Mother15) can be given as examples of interpreting the child as an element that unites the family. Besides, the statements such as “child is the most beautiful feeling in the world.” (Mother96) and “our source of joy, the one with whom we can spend every moment having fun and relieving stress...” (Mother157) can be given as examples of interpreting the child as an investment that provides psychological benefits.

It can be seen that the participants interpreted the concept of child as “a developing being” in the second place (18.5%) according to frequency. When the responses of the mothers in the category of development were analyzed on the basis of sub-categories, it was determined that the child was interpreted on the basis of “legal expression” and “period/age characteristics”. “Legal expression” includes the characteristics of the child and the barriers regarding the age of the child, as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whereas “period/age characteristics” includes the ideas that highlight the characteristics of the child during their development. While defining the child, the statement like “between 0-18 years old” (Mother6) can be given as an example of interpreting the child in parallel with the expressions found on the legal basis. Besides, the statement like “a child is a person who meets life, who is in the learning phase of life, and who has a high sense of curiosity and excitement.” (Mother2) can be given as an example of interpreting the child within the context of the developmental period/age characteristics of the child.

It can also be seen that the participants interpreted the concept of child as “property” in the third place (13.8%) according to frequency. When the responses of the mothers in the property category were analyzed, it was determined that the child was interpreted on the basis of the sub-categories entitled “paternalism”, “incompetent” and “needy”. “Paternalism” is based on the best interests of the child and includes making the best decision for the child, whereas “incompetent” includes focusing on the deficiencies of the child in different areas, which are thought to exist in comparison with the adult, rather than being needy towards the adult, and “needy” includes the ideas that emphasize the child’s dependence on adults. While defining the child, the statement like “being in need of protection and love” (Mother24) can be given as an example of interpreting the child as a needy being. Also, defining the child as “acting on their own impulses” (Mother51) can be given as an example of interpreting the child as an incompetent being. The statement like “I do not give right when they prefer harmful things. Because they are more valuable than their choices.” (Mother294) can be given as an example of interpreting the child on the basis of paternalism.

It is noticed that the participants interpreted the concept of child as “individual” in the fourth place (11.1%) according to frequency. The response given by Mother180 to the question of “Who is a child?” as “the child is an individual.” can be given as an example of “individual with rights” category, which included no sub-categories. It can also be noticed that the participants interpreted the concept of child as “innocent” in the fifth (last) place (10.8%) according to frequency. The response given by Mother177 to the question of “Are there any differences that distinguish the child from the adult?” as “There are so many differences, let me write a few of them. The child is not ungrateful; they respond when being loved. They are not fake; they tell what they think immediately. The child is pure, free from bad thoughts, and does not think about the evil of others.”, as well as her definition of the child as “innocent” can be given as examples of “innocent” category, which included no sub-categories.

3.2. Findings Regarding the Self-regulation Skills of the Children Within the Context of the Meanings That the Mothers Attributed to the Concept of Child

The second sub-problem of the study was determined as “What are the self-regulation skill levels of their children according to the views of mothers who have children in the pre-school period within the context of the meaning they attribute to the child?”. Within the scope of this sub-problem, the self-regulation skills of their children were analyzed according to the views of the mothers and separately in each of the five categories “investment tool, development, property, individual with rights, and innocent” by using descriptive statistical methods within the context of the meanings that mothers attributed to their children. Accordingly, the self-regulation skills of the children according to views of their mothers who interpreted the child as ‘investment tool’ are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Self-regulation skills of the children according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the child as ‘investment tool’

The Meaning That the Mothers Attributed to Child	Self-regulation Skills of the Children According to the Views of the Mothers	N	\bar{x} / Arithmetic Mean	Sd (Standard deviation)	Median	Min. Value	Max. Value
Investment Tool	Attention	136	23,66	3,880	24,00	11	30
	Working Memory	136	22,19	2,537	23,00	14	25
	Prohibitive Control-Emotion	136	20,83	3,583	21,00	9	25
	Prohibitive Control-Behavior	136	12,88	3,147	13,00	4	20
	Total Score	136	79,5588	10,05154	81,00	44	100

When the self-regulation skills of their children were examined according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the child as ‘investment tool’, it was determined that the highest mean score was in Attention sub-dimension (\bar{x} =23.66), while the lowest mean score was in Prohibitive Control-behavior sub-dimension (\bar{x} =12.88). In addition to these findings, when the self-regulation skills total score was examined, it could be seen that the self-regulation skills of their children according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the concept of child as ‘investment tool’ were high (\bar{x} =79.5588).

The findings regarding the self-regulation skills of the children whose mothers interpreted the child as ‘development’ are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Self-regulation skills of the children according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the child as ‘development’

The Meaning That the Mothers Attributed to Child	Self-regulation Skills of the Children According to the Views of the Mothers	N	\bar{x} / Arithmetic Mean	Sd (Standard deviation)	Median	Min. Value	Max. Value
Development	Attention	55	23,93	3,839	24,00	11	30
	Working Memory	55	21,80	2,798	22,00	12	25
	Prohibitive Control-Emotion	55	20,20	3,439	20,00	12	25
	Prohibitive Control-Behavior	55	12,60	3,125	13,00	5	20

Total Score	55	78,5273	11,17016	78,00	48	100
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When the self-regulation skills of their children were examined according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the child as 'development', it was determined that the highest mean score was in Attention sub-dimension ($\bar{x}=23.93$), whereas the lowest mean score was in Prohibitive Control-behavior sub-dimension ($\bar{x}=12.60$). In addition to these findings, when the self-regulation skills total score was examined, it could be seen that the self-regulation skills of their children according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the concept of child as 'development' were at moderate level ($\bar{x}=78.5273$).

The findings regarding the self-regulation skills of the children whose mothers interpreted the child as 'property' are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Self-regulation skills of the children according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the child as 'property'

The Meaning That the Mothers Attributed to Child	Self-regulation Skills of the Children According to the Views of the Mothers	N	\bar{x} / Arithmetic Mean	Sd (Standard deviation)	Median	Min. Value	Max. Value
Property	Attention	41	22,66	3,864	24,00	12	29
	Working Memory	41	21,83	2,597	22,00	16	25
	Prohibitive Control-Emotion	41	19,88	3,092	20,00	12	25
	Prohibitive Control-Behavior	41	11,73	3,091	12,00	5	19
	Total Score	41	76,0976	10,13115	76,00	48	94

When the self-regulation skills of their children were examined according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the child as 'property', it was determined that the highest mean score was in Attention sub-dimension ($\bar{x}=22.66$), whereas the lowest mean score was in Prohibitive Control-behavior sub-dimension ($\bar{x}=11.73$). In addition to these findings, when the self-regulation skills total score was examined, it could be seen that the self-regulation skills of their children according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the concept of child as 'property' were at moderate level ($\bar{x}=76.0976$).

According to the mothers who interpreted the child as 'individual', the findings regarding the self-regulation skills of their children are given in Table 5.

Table 5: Self-regulation skills of the children according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the child as 'individual'

The Meaning That the Mothers Attributed to Child	Self-regulation Skills of the Children According to the Views of the Mothers	N	\bar{x} / Arithmetic Mean	Sd (Standard deviation)	Median	Min. Value	Max. Value
Individual	Attention	33	23,36	3,462	24	12	28
	Working Memory	33	21,64	2,447	22	16	25
	Prohibitive Control-Emotion	33	20,18	3,720	20	10	25

	Prohibitive Control-Behavior	33	13,52	3,032	14	5	20
	Total Score	33	78,6970	9,50817	78,00	57	96

When the self-regulation skills of their children were examined according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the child as ‘individual’, it was determined that the highest mean score was in Attention sub-dimension ($\bar{x}=23.36$), whereas the lowest mean score was in Prohibitive Control-behavior sub-dimension ($\bar{x}=13.52$). In addition to these findings, when the self-regulation skills total score was examined, it could be seen that the self-regulation skills of their children according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the concept of child as ‘individual’ were at moderate level ($\bar{x}=78.6970$).

The findings regarding the self-regulation skills of the children whose mothers interpreted the child as ‘innocent’ are given in Table 6.

Table 6: Self-regulation skills of the children according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the child as ‘innocent’

The Meaning That the Mothers Attributed to Child	Self-regulation Skills of the Children According to the Views of the Mothers	N	\bar{x} / Arithmetic Mean	Sd (Standard deviation)	Median	Min. Value	Max. Value
Innocent	Attention	32	23,78	3,190	24,50	17	30
	Working Memory	32	22,41	2,746	23,50	15	25
	Prohibitive Control-Emotion	32	20,22	3,526	21,00	10	25
	Prohibitive Control-Behavior	32	12,44	3,417	13,00	6	19
	Total Score	32	78,8438	9,43606	81,00	61	94

When the self-regulation skills of their children were examined according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the child as ‘innocent’, it was determined that the highest mean score was in Attention sub-dimension ($\bar{x}=23.78$), whereas the lowest mean score was in Prohibitive Control-behavior sub-dimension ($\bar{x}=12.44$). In addition to these findings, when the self-regulation skills total score was examined, it could be seen that the self-regulation skills of their children according to the views of the mothers who interpreted the concept of child as ‘innocent’ were at moderate level ($\bar{x}=78.8438$).

4. Conclusion and Discussion

This study aimed to determine the meanings that mothers attribute to the concept of child and examine the self-regulation skill levels of their children within the context of the meaning attributed to the child. Accordingly, the findings obtained within the scope of the research are discussed in the light of the relevant literature in this section.

4.1. The Meanings Attributed to the Concept of Child

Considering the five categories involving the meanings attributed to the child, it can be seen that the majority of the mothers interpret the child as “investment tool”. The statements of the mothers in the “investment tool” category are in line with Toran’s (2012) finding that they have a pragmatist approach that considers the benefit of the parent or the state, regardless of whether it is material or moral. Besides, this finding can be explained with the statements by Saracaloğlu et al. (2020) indicating that culture, time, and geography affect the meaning attributed

to child, by Senemoğlu (2010) reporting that perception is affected by prior learning and expectations, and by Erdiller Yatmaz et al. (2018) explaining that childhood develops by being affected by the cultural and historical perspectives of the society. This view, which is fed by the expectations from the child to ensure the continuation of the generation, to be a protector for the family or to unite the family when necessary, and to be used as a labor force when required, can be shown as a meaning that has been ongoing from the past to the present and is still attributed to the child by the great majority. Also, the meaning attributed to the concept of child can be explained by the statements of Karaoğlu (2019) reporting that the meaning attributed to the child varies with the culture, values, and development level of the society in which the child lives, and the pragmatist approach and obedience expectation that is dominant especially in traditional Eastern culture can also be found in mothers in Turkey.

The statements obtained from the participants regarding the meaning attributed to the concept of child and discussed under the category of “development” mean that various features of all kinds of developmental processes (such as being curious, asking many questions, and being extremely active) that the child experiences in the developmental period are taken into consideration (Akıncı Demirbaş, 2015; Çelik & Çat, 2018). It is determined that the mothers in the development category acknowledged the concept of child on the basis of the expressions found on the legal ground and the periodic characteristics. The fact that the mothers’ interpretation of the concept of child on the basis of their development is in the second place according to frequency can be considered in accordance with the view of New Childhood Sociology suggesting that the child may differ from adults in such matters as interests and needs, and that childhood should be regarded as a heterogeneous group instead of being limited to the ideal level (Demir Gürdal, 2013). Within the scope of this research, the statements included in the development category regarding the child are the statements based on the various characteristics of the children in the developmental process rather than comparing them with adults and finding deficiencies. Accordingly, it can be interpreted that the mothers participating in the research may have thought that children, just like adults, can have individual differences when it comes to their peers, and this might be associated with having an awareness that the child is not a “deficient” but a “developing” being. The fact that “development” category is in the second place in terms of frequency can be interpreted and discussed in various ways with the findings of various studies present in the literature (Akıncı Demirbaş, 2015; Kuyucu et al., 2013; Kıldan et al., 2012; Pesen, 2015; Uğur, 2018). For example, the findings obtained in the current study are not fully consistent with the findings obtained in the studies conducted by Akıncı Demirbaş (2015), Kuyucu et al. (2013), and Kıldan et al. (2012). Considering the findings of the study by Akıncı Demirbaş (2015) conducted with the students of the department of child development, it can be seen that the view that the child is a “developing being” ranks third last. Similarly, when the findings of the study conducted by Kıldan et al. (2012) with pre-service teachers are considered, it can be seen that the child is approached from a behavioral perspective by a much larger majority compared to the constructivist view in both the first and fourth grades; whereas when the findings of the study carried out by Kuyucu et al. (2013) with preschool teachers are considered, it can be seen that the view that the child is a developing being ranks eighth. In the current study, considering the fact that the participants are the mothers and the category of “development” is in the second place according to frequency, mothers, who are expected to have less conscious when compared to those with field education, are thought to have the conscious of child development more today as they have emphasized child development more than students, pre-service teachers and pre-school teachers in the field of child development. This inference can be more clearly grounded when evaluated together with the findings of Pesen’s research conducted in 2015. Indeed, in that study carried out with parents in 2015, the view of the parents regarding that the child is a developing being ranks seventh and the fact that this category ranks second today can be interpreted as an increase in the awareness of child development. The view that the awareness of child development has increased can also be supported by the findings obtained in the study conducted by Uğur (2018). While examining the views of grandmothers who support the care of their grandchildren on child and child raising practices, it is determined that grandmothers, who are expected to have more traditional approaches, have implemented practices in parallel with the views of field experts on child development and that they had not had the awareness that children should be supported in all areas while raising their own children. Accordingly, it is thought that this awareness of grandmothers, who are expected to exhibit more traditional approaches, is associated with the increase in the knowledge and practices of today’s mothers on the issue. In addition to all this information, the fact that the category of “development” is in the second place in terms of frequency can be explained by the incidence of not encountering the categories of “little adult”, “sinner”, and “reflective”, and the increase in the awareness of child development, which are regarded as the possible reasons for this fact.

The statements obtained from the participants regarding the meaning attributed to the concept of child and classified under the category of “property” mean that the child is seen as a property that belongs to the family or the state (Toran, 2012). Accordingly, it has been determined that the mothers participating in the research interpret their children as a being on whom they have high power and authority, in other words, as a property that belongs to them. It is also determined that the mothers in the category of “property” have had statements about the sub-categories of “incompetent” and “needy”, with the majority in the sub-category of “paternalism”, while explaining their views regarding the child. It is noted that the mothers, who consider the child as a property, have made statements centered on the parent while describing the children and that this category ranks third in terms of frequency. The fact that the mothers in the category of “property” are in the third place in terms of frequency can be interpreted in various ways with the findings of various studies present in the literature (Akgün, 2016; Akıncı Demirbaş, 2015; Kuyucu et al., 2013; Uğur, 2018). For example, the findings regarding the interpretation of the child as “property” differ from the findings of the studies in which the meaning attributed to the child by pre-school teachers, child development students, and pre-school teachers (Akgün, 2016; Akıncı Demirbaş, 2015; Kuyucu et al., 2013). The fact that children are mostly defined as “raw material to be shaped” and “passive receiver” by pre-school teacher candidates (Akgün, 2016), child development students (Akıncı Demirbaş, 2015), and pre-school teachers (Kuyucu et al., 2013) may be associated with the findings that can be included in the category of “property”, and this finding does not coincide with the fact that it is in the first place in the related studies but in the third place in the current study. This situation can be explained by the fact that with easier access to information, the understanding that the child is a developing being has increased and that the child is a being who just takes what is given without questioning as their understanding and interpretation skills are limited have decreased. When the relevant and current research findings are compared, the statements that can be categorized as property, though the order of the responses is different, and the incidence of different studies conducted with different participants, can be explained by the statements of Pesen (2015) emphasizing that the person’s views regarding the child are more associated with positioning the self in the life of the child (active or passive) rather than being a teacher or parent. Among these research findings, the fact that the category of “development”, which is ranked in the second place in terms of frequency, is followed by the category of “property”, can be explained by associating it with the study conducted by Uğur (2018). In the study of Uğur (2018), which has determined that grandmothers who support the care of their grandchildren are aware of child development and carry out practices supporting development, it is noted that the practices of grandmothers regarding this awareness are shaped according to the views of parents and grandmothers (which are thought to increase the family status or with the concerns about the future of the child) rather than the wishes and interests of children. This finding revealed by Uğur (2018) can be interpreted as the fact that the people who support the development of the child, despite having awareness of child development, prioritize their own views over the child or consider the best for the child on behalf of the child. Accordingly, the findings related to the category of “property”, which follows the category of “development” within the scope of the research, can be interpreted as the imposition of the views on the child by considering what is “the best” for the child on behalf of the child, even if the awareness about the development of the child is increasing. The fact that the category of “property” is ranked third in terms of frequency can also be interpreted by associating it with Turkey’s cultural structure, as it is associated similarly with the category of “investment tool”. The traditional perspective both in traditional Eastern cultures (Karadoğan, 2019) and in underdeveloped/developing countries (İnal, as cited in Toran, 2012), the expectation of obedience from the child (Canatan, 2011), and regarding the family more primary rather than the child in the Turkish culture, can be shown as of the reasons for this fact. Nonetheless, considering the frequency of the category of “property”, it can be said that this view still continues, albeit with a decrease when compared to previous years.

The statements obtained from the participants regarding the meaning attributed to the concept of child and classified under the category of “individual” mean that the child is regarded as an individual with their rights (Tezel Şahin & Cevher, 2007; Toran, 2012). accordingly, it is noted that the mothers participating in the research interpret the child as an individual with rights at a relatively lower ratio when compared to other categories. At this point, the meaning attributed to the child as an “individual with rights”, and the fact that this category is the second last according to frequency can be evaluated separately. When the findings of the studies by Akıncı Demirbaş (2015) and Kuyucu et al. (2013) are compared with those obtained in the current study, it can be interpreted that the meaning attributed to the child has changed as these studies do not reveal any findings regarding the meaning attributed to the concept of child as “individual”. Similarly, the findings of the study conducted by Arslan et al. (2017) with the participation of the mothers who have children in the pre-school period exhibit that

90% of the mothers who advocate that the child should be informed about their rights as an individual from an early age have left the question about children's rights unanswered, and the rest 10% just have limited knowledge about the issue. When the findings of the current study are compared with those of the study by Arslan et al. (2017), it can be concluded that in addition to the parents' views that the child is an individual, the responses given by the mothers to the interview questions about children's rights within the scope of the research and the ratio of responding these questions mean that they are more conscious about children's rights today. There are also studies in the literature on the interpretation of the child as an individual, which can be said to be in line with the findings of the current research (Erdiller Yatmaz et al., 2018, 2019; Uğur, 2018). For example, it is noted in the study by Erdiller Yatmaz et al. (2018, 2019) that pre-school teacher candidates have defined the child as an active being/individual, albeit with a small percentage, and in the study by Uğur (2018), it is revealed that the grandmothers who support the care of their grandchildren have more awareness of the fact that children are individuals compared to the process of raising their own children, and they have directed their practices accordingly. Therefore, it can be said that the ratio of evaluating the child as an individual has increased in the process.

The fact that the category of "individual" is in the second last place according to frequency does not show parallelism with the findings of the research carried out by Kağıtçıbaşı and Ataca (2005) and Ünal and Kök (2017). In the study by Kağıtçıbaşı and Ataca (2005), in which they examined the changing views on the values attributed to children and expectations from children between 1975 and 2003, the findings that the child's independence and self-confidence are emphasized instead of the obedience expectation in 1975 in terms of the desired characteristics of the child does not fully coincide with the findings of the current study. This situation, which is considered as an inconsistency between the findings, can be based on the adoption of the expectation of obedience regarding the child (in other words, the category of "property") more than the views that children are individuals in this study with the emphasis on the individuality of the child instead of obedience in 2003. In this respect, it can be interpreted as a remarkable finding that the emphasis on the individuality of the child is expected to continue increasingly since 2003, but it is not indigenized as much as the category of "property". Similarly, the findings of the study by Ünal and Kök (2017) that parents support the statements about the child as "individual" when describing them more than the categories of "future" and "source of happiness" do not coincide with the findings of the current study. Contrary to Ünal and Kök (2017), it is noted in this study that children are perceived as "future" and "source of happiness", in other words, as an "investment tool", and the category of "individual" ranks second last according to frequency. This inconsistency between the current study and the study of Ünal and Kök (2017) can be interpreted as that the parents may have thought that they should convey their views as they should be rather than what they actually think while presenting their views about the interview questions and that the study aims to examine the views of the parents regarding the needs, rights, and responsibilities of their children. Although there is a rank difference between the findings of the current research and those of the research by Ünal and Kök (2017), the fact that parents mostly punish their children when they do not fulfill their responsibilities and express that their expectations from the child is to be respected can be shown as a situation supporting the reason for this inference. Finally, the statements obtained from the participants regarding the meaning attributed to the concept of child and classified under the category of "innocent" mean that they highlight the innocence or goodness of the child as the point where they are separated from adults (Toran, 2012). The meaning attributed to the child as an innocent being can be explained by religious-based cultural factors. Indeed, Karadoğan (2019) states that beliefs affect the meaning attributed to the child; and considering that the majority of the society in Turkey has Islamic faith, Akın (2015) indicates that the child is considered a symbol of innocence by Muslims, and Stier and Kaplan (2019) suggest in their study with the participants from 24 countries that being religious directly affect the views regarding the child, all of which are thought to support this view.

Although the meaning attributed to the concept of child as an innocent being is a finding revealed as a result of this research and explained in accordance with beliefs, it is the last category in terms of frequency compared to other categories, which can be explained by the fact that religious-based values are losing their influence today. Another reason why this view, which has a history dating back to Turkish societies living in the previous centuries (Özdemir, 2002; Sağlam, 2002), is less adopted today can be explained by the existence of the perception that child is seen as innocent in the immediate family, as also advocated by Elkind (as cited in Eraslan, 2019), the reinforcement of this perception by the state, media and schools, and the change experienced in parallel with the changes in the family structure (Yurtsever Kılıçgün, 2015). Indeed, it can be said that today, the family structure

consists of the immediate family in which both parents work, and child care is shared with such institutions as day-care centers and kindergartens rather than a type of family in which only the father works, so the individuality of the child is given more significance (Dencik, 1989). Therefore, it can be said that when the current family structure (immediate family in which both parents take part in business life or single-parent works) is taken into account alone, the views and expectations of the child may have also changed. This situation can be associated with the changes in the family structure and daily life, as well as the easy access to information through media. Accordingly, together with the fact that the child is seen as an innocent being, it can be said that due to the emphasis on “developing being” becoming more prominent and due to such reasons as obtaining information about different beliefs through media and thinking about this information in parallel with the developing world, people are not limited to their own culture and beliefs and their existing beliefs and values have lost their former power. The study conducted by Ayçiçeği Dinn and Kağıtçıbaşı (2010), in which young people emphasized religious and traditional values less than their own parents in terms of the reasons for having a child and the meaning attributed to the child; the study conducted by Çelik and Çat (2018), in which as the age of the participants decreases, their adoption of religious and traditional education decreases; and the study by Mishra et al. (2005), in which urban youth in India support the traditional or religious values of the child to a much lesser extent within the context of the meaning attributed to the child, support this view. This view advocating that religious beliefs have lost their influence compared to the past can also be supported by the fact that the category of “God-given”, which is present in the literature, has not been found within the scope of this research.

In line with the findings obtained within the scope of the research regarding the meaning that the participants attribute to the concept of child, it is revealed that the participants have evaluated the child in a total of five categories as investment tool, development, property, individual with rights, and innocent, respectively; and it is also noted that the categories of “little adult”, “sinner”, “God-given”, and “reflective”, all of which are present in the literature, are not among the meanings attributed to the child by the participants. The fact that no statements regarding the category of “little adult”, which is present in the literature but not found in the data sets, are revealed as a result of the analysis means that the related findings are not in parallel with the findings of the study by Ayyıldız and Akardaş Karataş (2020) regarding the expression of “little human”. The expression of “little human”, which can be considered under the category of “little adult”, can be divided into two forms and explained, as Ayyıldız and Akardaş Karataş (2020) also stated in their studies, as “dwarfism” in science or as a point of view encountered until the 17th century. The fact that this expression, which can be considered under the category of “little adult”, is not found in this study can be explained by the fact that participating mothers are much more conscious about the development of their child, considering that “development” is the second most common category in the findings related to the meaning attributed to the concept of child. Moreover, the fact that no statements regarding the category of “sinner”, which is present in the literature but again not found in the data sets, are revealed as a result of the analysis can be based on the fact that the mothers have knowledge about the developmental processes of their children, as well as the culture and beliefs dominant in the society. This can be explained by the fact that the category of “sinner” is not a perspective possessed much by Muslims (Akin, 2015) and that the category of “innocent” is an accepted category, although it is expressed less frequently than the other four categories within the scope of the research. Considering Piaget’s view that children under the age of six do not have rules (Senemoğlu, 2010), this situation can also be explained by the fact that the child’s inability to make sense of concepts such as “property” or “lie” or their “egocentric” perspectives do not make them bad, but, on the contrary, is considered as a developmental characteristic today.

The fact that no statements regarding the category of “God-given” are revealed as a result of the analysis can be explained by the findings of the study conducted by Mishra et al. (2005) that despite their belief that the child is a being that will save the parent from moral debts, the urban and young generation living in India do not attach much importance to this situation. Accordingly, the findings obtained from the research carried out in India in 2005 can be interpreted as a situation in parallel with the change in the evaluation of the child on the basis of religious values by the young population, even though the basis of belief in Turkey and India differ from each other. Similarly, this situation can be explained by the fact that people have begun to move away from belief-based views due to the developments in both science and technology and other areas, all of which influence social life and thinking styles. Finally, the fact that no statements regarding the category of “reflective” are revealed as a result of the analysis does not show any parallelism with the findings of the research regarding the attribution of the concept of child as a reflective being in the literature (Akıncı Demirbaş, 2015; Kuyucu et al., 2013; Pesen, 2015). This situation can

be explained by the fact that the child may be interpreted as someone who has the ability to understand and interpret thanks to the developments in child development and easy access to related information, rather than being interpreted as a being that reflects only what they see, just like a mirror, a robot or eyes. As another interpretation, the fact that the categories revealed within the context of the meaning attributed to the concept of child in the literature are not found within the scope of this research can be explained by the sociological changes (changes in the family type in parallel with the changes in the cultural structure and developments in the field of technology, as also mentioned previously in the literature) experienced over time.

4.2. Self-regulation Skills of the Children within the Context of the Meanings That the Mothers Attribute to the Concept of Child

When the self-regulation skills of the children, whose parents interpret the concept of child under 5 categories as “investment tool”, “development”, “property”, “individual”, and “innocent”, are examined, it is determined that there are differences between the groups according to the categories of the meaning that the parents attribute to the child. These differences in children’s self-regulation skills within the context of the meaning that mothers attribute to the child are found to be high only in the category of “investment tool”, and it is noted that the children in the other categories have moderate level of self-regulation skills. Accordingly, it is thought that the meaning attributed to children may have affected children’s self-regulation skills in different ways, and it is considered that it would be more appropriate to interpret all the categories related to the meaning attributed to the child separately.

4.3. Self-regulation skills of the children whose mothers interpret them as “investment tool”

Considering the self-regulation skills total scores, it can be seen that the self-regulation skills of the children, whose mothers interpret them as “investment tool”, are at a high level according to the views of the mothers. This finding can be explained by interpreting the relationship between the characteristics of the investment tool category and the role assigned to the child, the importance given to social harmony, supportive parental activities, and the returns of self-regulation skills. Among the categories, the fact that the self-regulation skills of the children who are perceived as “investment tool” are solely high can be interpreted by associating the roles assigned to the child with its effects on the child’s behaviors. The findings of the study by Erbil (2016) revealing that the perceptions and expectations regarding the children will determine the roles assigned to them, the opportunities to be provided, and the relations to be established with them, and thus will affect their lives significantly, as well as the parents’ expectations from the child (Bayındır, 2016; Mischel, 2016) and the expectations of the social environment in which the child is involved (Ertürk, 2013; Öztapak & Özyürek, 2018) will affect the child’s self-regulation skills can all be considered as a situation in line with the finding of the current study. This finding can also be interpreted within the context of the basis of the investment tool category and the special importance given to social harmony. This category, in which the child is expected to please other people by prioritizing the expectations of others and it is important to behave appropriately for others, can also be specified as the group in which social harmony is deemed most important. In this regard, this finding can be explained by the connection between the importance of self-regulation skills in ensuring social harmony (Bayındır, 2016; Bayındır & Ural, 2016; Ertürk, 2013; Tekin, 2018) and the importance given by the people who interpret the child as an investment tool to the compliance with social rules. Among all the groups, the fact that children who are perceived as “investment tool” only have a high level of self-regulation skills, as well as the expectations from the child, can be interpreted by evaluating the effect of these expectations on the child’s self-regulation skills (Ertürk, 2013; Bayındır, 2016; Mischel, 2016; Öztapak & Özyürek, 2018) together with the education of children shaped to be the outcome of the investment made in them. Indeed, it can be said that the parents who raise their children in accordance with the purpose they want their children to adopt (to be the bright future of the country, to provide psychological contribution to parents, etc.) may attach more importance to supporting the development of their children accordingly. The statements that the pre-school period is the most open period to external influences (MEB, 2013), the child’s control of impulses and emotions is supported by social-emotional development (Tekin, 2018), and the routines provided by parents support the child’s self-regulation skills (Kopp, 1982) are thought to support this inference. Finally, this finding can be explained by evaluating it with the parallelism between the returns of self-regulation skills and the expectations from the child interpreted as an investment tool. When the returns of self-regulation skills and the content of the investment tool category are examined together, it is seen that there are great similarities in the basis of both and that the returns of self-regulation skills seem to be the characteristics not only parents but also society

would like their children to have. These similarities can be exemplified by the sub-categories of the investment tool category and the social or individual returns of self-regulation. For example, the view that the child is an investment in terms of the psychological benefits they will provide to the parent can be interpreted by associating with the returns of self-regulation in terms of increasing creativity, social skills, and academic achievement; and the view that the child is an investment for future can be interpreted by associating with the returns of self-regulation in terms of having socially approved and even exemplary features. When the connection between the psychological benefits that the child will provide to the parent and the returns of self-regulation are considered with a broader perspective, it can be said that there is a significant connection between the returns of self-regulation like obeying the rules, exhibiting positive social behaviors, being self-confident, having high academic achievement and increased empathy skills and the positive characteristics of children that enable the parent to be happy or be boasted. Indeed, an academically or socially successful child can be a source of pride or happiness for the family, and with high empathy skills, the child can understand the parents better and respond to their expectations more easily. Parallel to the psychological benefits provided by the child, the fact that the child is the common being that the family is proud of, as well as that the child is seen as a unifying factor for the family are also thought to be associated with such returns. When the connection between the interpretation of the child as an investment for the future and the returns of self-regulation is considered with a broader perspective, it can be said that there is an important correlation between both the social and individual returns of self-regulation and the meaning attributed to children as support for their family in the future or the future of the country. It can be said that a child who takes responsibility/fulfills their responsibilities and who experiences fewer problems regarding the use of money can be the family's future care provider or economic investment. The low rate of addiction, crime, and obesity, but the high rate of being ethical in business and social life can reduce the burden of the state and enable the country to respond more easily to future expectations. Thus, the statements that self-regulation is a key point for the formation of social life and the success of society (Polnariiev, as cited in Fındık Tanrıbuyurdu & Güler Yıldız, 2014; Posner & Rothbart, 1998) and that self-regulation is a very important tool for ensuring peace and cooperation among people (Eisenberg & Wang, as cited in Ertürk, 2013) are also thought to support this view. To summarize, considering all the returns mentioned above, this view, which varies from the psychological benefit it will provide to the parent to the future of the state but unites on the same basis, may be deemed more important, and therefore more adopted, than the other categories by the families who interpret the child as an investment tool.

4.4. Self-regulation skills of the children whose mothers interpret them as “development”

Considering the self-regulation skills total scores, it can be seen that the self-regulation skills of the children, whose mothers interpret them as “development”, are at moderate level according to the views of the mothers. The fact that the self-regulation skill levels of the children who are interpreted as a developing being are at moderate level can be interpreted by associating it with that development is in the second place in terms of frequency within the context of meaning attributed to children in the current study. It is thought that both the contemporary approaches such as the New Childhood Sociology and the attention paid to the differences between children by the experts in the field of child development may have influenced this situation. As known, children are a heterogeneous group with different characteristics (Demir Gürdal, 2013); and as emphasized in the basic principles of pre-school education (MEB, 2013), there are individual differences in the development process. When these statements are evaluated together with the fact that the development category is in the second place in terms of frequency in the findings regarding the meaning attributed to the concept of child, it is thought that mothers are aware of individual differences. It is also considered that thanks to having this awareness, mothers do not pressure their children regarding the development of self-regulation skills or the development of other skills, and they can appreciate that their children have an average skill level according to the normal course of development.

4.5. Self-regulation skills of the children whose mothers interpret them as “property”

Considering the self-regulation skills total scores, it can be seen that the self-regulation skills of the children, whose mothers interpret them as “property”, are at moderate level according to the views of the mothers. The fact that the self-regulation skill levels of the children who are interpreted as property are at moderate level can be interpreted by associating it with the characteristics of the property category, the effect of the role assigned to the child on the behavior, and the results of the relevant research. The category of property can be explained as a kind of approach in which the expectations regarding the child are imposed by ignoring the willpower of the child.

Therefore, it is thought that it may have prevented the child from regulating their emotions, behaviors, and thoughts in an internally controlled manner by influencing the fact that they become externally controlled individuals. The fact that the self-regulation skill levels of the children who are interpreted as property are at moderate level can be interpreted as having affected the child's evaluation of the self as a passive and not self-regulating being by influencing the expectations regarding the child and the roles assigned to the child. Thus, it can also be said that the decrease in children's self-belief and desire to regulate their behaviors with an intrinsic motivation may have affected their self-regulation skills to remain at a moderate level. Indeed, when the self-regulation total mean scores of the children are examined within the context of the meaning attributed to the child are considered, it can be noticed that the lowest score belongs to the children who are interpreted as "property". Accordingly, the fact that the children, who are interpreted as property, have lower self-regulation scores compared to other groups, is considered as a situation that can be explained by their acceptance of this situation as a result of the impositions they are constantly exposed to and by the decrease in their belief in themselves. The fact that self-regulation skills are at moderate level within the context of interpreting the child as "property", with a lower mean score compared to all the other groups, can be evaluated by examining them together with the relevant studies. For example, the findings of the study conducted by Olson et al. (as cited in Faber, 2002) revealing that the children of parents with authoritarian-strict and normative attitudes have problems in regulating their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors can be associated with the category of property, which includes the views regarding having high authority and power over the child. Similarly, this finding of the current study can be evaluated in parallel with the findings of the study conducted by Bayındır (2016) stating that having an attitude of the mothers expecting obedience from their children works against the children's self-regulation scores; and also with the findings of the study conducted by Uykan and Akkaynak (2019) revealing that their children's self-regulation skills progress negatively when parents have an authoritarian attitude. Furthermore, the statements of Yurtsever (2009) emphasizing that the control and freedom in the child's behavior change in accordance with the parental attitude are also thought to support this inference. In this regard, it can be said that the parent's expectation of obedience or having an oppressive attitude in the category of "property" may have affected the children in terms of having moderate level of self-regulation skills.

4.6. Self-regulation skills of the children whose mothers interpret them as "individual"

Considering the self-regulation skills total scores, it can be seen that the self-regulation skills of the children, whose mothers interpret them as "individual", are at moderate level according to the views of the mothers. The fact that the self-regulation skills of the children, which are thought to be required for individuals to stand upon their own feet within the context of interpreting the child as an individual, is deemed as an unexpected finding within the scope of this research. The findings that the self-regulation skills of the groups other than the investment tool category are at a more moderate level can be explained by associating with the high level of care and protection attitudes of the parents in all categories. As also known, the family is the place where the child first begins to interpret the relationship within the family, as well as many other situations, and the child does not have any other examples that they can compare this situation observed for the first time. For this reason, the family infects the child with various traditions or attitudes, and despite the fact that the child has the freedom to choose, they shape their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors at least by being influenced by the first experiences they have had within the family for a long time (Eraslan, 2019). Accordingly, the fact that the adoption of care and protection attitudes due to the age group of children and the insecurity of parents regarding the environment is at high level can be explained by the familiarity with the attitudes that children should be cared for and protected. It is also considered that the fact that the children are influenced by their first experiences as a result of the decisions made "for their own sake, for their own benefit" may have affected their self-regulation skills, which involve directing their own behaviors, to be at a more moderate level.

4.7. Self-regulation skills of the children whose mothers interpret them as "innocent"

Considering the self-regulation skills total scores, it can be seen that the self-regulation skills of the children, whose mothers interpret them as "innocent", are at moderate level according to the views of the mothers. The fact that the self-regulation skills of the children are at moderate level within the context of interpreting the child as innocent can be explained by associating it with the religious influences and the expectations from the child shaped within the framework of these influences. The view that the child is innocent is based on religious beliefs, as also

mentioned in the previous sections. According to the Islamic belief, which can be considered as the basis of the “innocent” view in Turkey, together with the fact that the child is not responsible for their own behaviors until they become “examinant” or they reach “the age of distinction” (seven years old), they do not have “criminal responsibility” (Saltekin, 2019). In Islam, the child is not deemed responsible for their behaviors until they have the power to distinguish between good and bad (TDK (Current Turkish Dictionary of Turkish Language Association), n.d.) or until they reach the age of seven. When the belief that the child is not responsible for their own thoughts and behaviors before the age of seven according to Islam and that the children of the mothers participating in the current research are between the ages of 5 and 6 are considered, this situation can be understood more clearly. Accordingly, it can be said that the mothers, who interpret the child as innocent, may not have any expectations and practices for regulating the child’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors as an innocent being who is not yet responsible for their actions.

5. Recommendations

In the recommendations section of the current research, the recommendations for parents, teachers, and researchers are presented in accordance with the results of the research.

5.1. Recommendations for Parents and Teachers

In the light of all the findings obtained within the scope of the research, it is recommended that all the shareholders regarding the education of the child may;

- participate in trainings on the rights of children and read various sources accordingly in order to be aware of the fact that children are individuals with their rights,
- pay attention to and regulate the expressions they use and the attitudes they possess by avoiding the statements that the child is insufficient, needy, and can be shaped as desired, especially in the family and pre-school education institutions where children have their first experiences,

5.2. Recommendations for Researchers

In the light of all the findings obtained within the scope of the research and in accordance with the limitations of the study, it is recommended that the researchers that will carry out research in the field may;

- conduct such a study, whose sample group involves only mothers, by including fathers in the sample,
- conduct studies in which the compatibility between the meanings that the parents attribute to the child, as well as the variables analyzed in the current study are examined with the participants involving both mothers and fathers,
- study similar research topics by determining different groups with and without parents as the sample.

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