

# PRESCHOOL TEACHER CANDIDATES' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR FAMILIES

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## **Abstract**

*The primary function of family is to be a unit to prepare a social, biological and psychological environment for the members of the family to develop themselves. The researches indicate that the most of the problems which has been observed on the members is connected with the unhealthy structure of their family.*

*The aim of this research is to examine of preschool teacher candidates perceptions about their families. The research was carried out among 131 undergraduate students studying in the department of Preschool Education Faculty of Education at Cyprus International University. Data collected with family perception scale (Bulut, 1990). The research based on descriptive research method.*

*In the analysis of data, frequency and percentage values had been calculated and to test the difference Pearson Correlation, t test are used. The main importance of the research is focus on the teacher candidate's family concept because of their vocational and developmental needs.*

**Key Words:** Preschool teacher candidates, family environment, family perception.

## 1. Introduction

The quality of society's structure is bound to families that form society. The health of societies is related with the health of family. The health of individuals is possible when the family in which individuals live fulfills its functions (Kargı, Akman, 2006, İşmen, 2004). Thus, individuals', accordingly societies' health has a close relationship with the system and structure of the family.

According to the definition of Turkish Family Structure Specialization Commission; family is a unit that consists of individuals who have affinity, mostly live in the same house, by the way of blood or legal relation and in which individuals' sexual, psychological, social and economical needs are provided, in which their harmony and integration to the society are provided and arranged (Nazlı, 2003). Researches, contrary to assumptions, shown that the "nuclear family" type that is the most common in contemporary society is not the result of industrialization and economic development; also it was widespread in primitive societies and before the industrial revolution. Extended family was born in the later social development when people pass on to the permanent settlement. Although the family institution that lost its production function with the Industrial Revolution has some changes, it has kept its functions in providing basic and psychological needs, and continuation of the generation (Özgüven, 2009). According to the research that was held in 2006 by TUIK numbers show that most of the families have the structure of nuclear family (6.0% Single-person households, 80.7% nuclear family, extended family 13.0%, 0.3% of the student / employee households consisting of.) (Özdemir, Vatandaş, Torlak, 2009).

The foundation of psycho social development of individuals is laid in the family. Parent-child relationship begins to change in the adolescent period. Adolescent period is a transition period which contains maturation from childhood to adolescence in terms of biological, psychological, mental and social aspects (Yavuzer, 1998). Adolescence, according to Hall who studies on teenage psychology, is a period between ages 14 and 24 (Şemin, 1992). On the other hand UNESCO describes adolescence as between ages 15 and 25 (Yavuzer, 1998). The child, who begins growing up, with the rapid changes in his adolescence period he begins behaving more autonomously, questioning family roles, conflict in such cases especially that are clothes, appearance and responsibilities (Salkind, 2001). Reactions that parents give to those changes affect the family system in many ways either in a positive or negative way. Family system consists of sub-systems that are marital and parent, children relationships. Contemporary theory and applications emphasize the relationship between family system and adolescence behaviors. Scientists who analyze the structure of family system and family relations are in consensus that problems in marital or parent-child relationship affects the lives of children and teenagers directly in a negative way, and even they are in relation with variables such as anxiety, anger, aggression, harmony and behavior disorders, low academic achievement in children and teenagers (Fincham, 1998). Studies on children and adolescents in psychiatry are seen that they prove this thought. Especially, in the emergence and continuation of mental health related problems such as depression negative family functions have a vital role (Wilhelm, Boyce, Brownhill, 2000). Still, studies have emphasized that positive relationship between family system and parental behavior is important in the growth of adolescents. In the effective and balanced family systems, there is the use of a high level of flexibility and commitment, the balance between being introverted and individuality, egalitarian leadership, the democratic approach and positive communication skills (Henry et al., 2006). Therefore, it can be said that the quality of family relationships and family members' perception of family roles are the indicators.

When the clinical literature about family studies that has been held since 1950s are reviewed, it can be seen that families that have problematic adolescents are problematic social systems. It has seen in some researches that children who have weak communication with their families are under risk as psychologically. Even when these children grew, they present more significant negative indications as

psychologically. Faw and Goldsmith 1980, in their studies in which they compared self perception of adolescents and perception of parents towards adolescents and moreover in which they tested the dimensions of relations of adolescents and parents, indicated that perception of parent has a vital role in the positive perception of themselves. In the study in which agreement with parent affects the educational and occupational achievement of adolescents, it was stated that mother-child relationship is effective in development of child's self-perception and it is more effective than father-child relationship. According to the results of the study, self-perception of girls is affected by parent-child relationship than self-perception of boys (Offer, Ostrov, Howard, 1982).

Olson, who held studies about family, mentioned four types of family systems and he defined them; 1. Balanced families that are at a high level both in domestic commitment and in integration. 2. Partially balanced families that are at a partially high level both in domestic commitment and in integration. 3. Mid-level families that are at a high level either in domestic commitment or in integration. 4. Extreme families that are at an extremely high level both in domestic commitment and in integration. Each member in the family forms the dynamics of his sub-system according to his own thoughts. Sub-systems of parent-adolescent help system of wholly family system and its functionality. Parents have important responsibilities in subjects such as dealing with adolescents and looking after them in the sub-system of parent-adolescent (Henry et al., 2006).

Although there are serious problems between teenagers and their parents, on the contrary of that is known, most of the teenagers feel close themselves to their parents, they respect their assessments, they feel their parents love them and take them into consideration and they have huge respect towards them as individuals (Steinberg, 2007). In fact, the family directs the teenager in every type of his thoughts by influencing him. In this sense, it can be said that the teenager and the family cannot be separated and they support each other by influencing each other.

In this study we studied with university students who are at the latest stage of their adolescence period. Learning students' perceptions of their families was aimed in the study. Students' perceptions of family were analyzed descriptively in the context of gender, parental education level and family structure variables.

## **2. Method**

This research is a study that has relational survey model among descriptive methods. Descriptive approach that is used common aimed to describe the situation that is interested. Survey models are the approaches that aim to describe the situations that they are (Karasar, 2009). The universe of the research consists of students who are being trained at Pre-school Teacher Training department of Cyprus International University. The sampling consists of 131 students who were selected by random sampling method. Personal information form and Family Evaluation Scale were used in the research as a data collection tool.

### **2.1 Personal Information Form:**

A form that was used for getting information about situations such as gender, parental education level, and family structure of students was used as a personal information form.

### **2.2 Mc Master Family Assessment Device (FAD)**

McMaster Family Assessment Device that was developed in the frame of Family Research Program by Brown University and Butler Hospital in the USA is a measurement tool that describes in which subjects the family fulfills its functions and in which subjects it does not fulfill its functions. FAD was obtained by

applying McMaster Family Functioning Model clinically on families. The adaptation of the scale was done by Bulut 1990. The scale, whose Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient ranged from .92 to .72, consists of 60 items and 7 sub-dimensions. McMaster Family Assessment Device aims to determine whether structural and organizational characteristics of families and family relationships and interactions are healthy or unhealthy. 7 sub-dimensions of the scale are like; Problem Solving, Communication, Roller, Affective Responsiveness, Affective Involvement, Behavior Control and General Functions. In the reliability study of the scale, scale gave meaningful result in the level of  $p < .001$  in terms of both internal consistency and score stability (Öner, 1994, Karaveli, 2000).

### 3. Findings and Interpretation

Demographic data about teacher candidates who are in the research group is shown in the below tables.

**Table.1 Distribution of teacher candidates according to their gender**

Gender	n	%
Female	119	90.8
Male	12	9.2
Total	131	100

As it is in Turkey, in Turkish Republic of North Cyprus female students constitute the majority of the students who are get trained in Pre-school Teacher Training departments of the universities. 90.8% of the candidate teachers who are in this research group are females.

**Table.2 Parental education level of candidate teachers**

Education Level	Mother		Father	
	n	%	n	%
Literate	5	3.8	-	-
Primary school	46	35.1	25	19.1
Secondary school	11	8.4	15	11.5
High School	35	26.7	33	25.2
University	34	26	52	39.7
Graduate	-	-	6	4.6
Total	131	100	131	100

When parental education level of the students that are in the research group was analyzed, most of the mothers graduated from primary school and high school and university follow it according to the order of percents. It is seen that majority of the fathers graduated from the university.

**Table. 3 The number of members in the families of candidate teachers**

The number of family member(s)	n	%
1	-	-
2	6	4.6
3	16	12.2
4	54	41.2
5	35	26.7
6 and more	20	15.3

92.4% of the candidate teachers indicate that grandfather or grandmother who is the member of wide family does not live in their families, on the other hand 7.6% of them indicate that one of the members of wide family, grandfather or grandmother, lives within their families. The families of the students in this research group are the members of nuclear family with high ratio. Numbers, according to the research that was held by TUIK in 2006, the majority (80.7%) of the families in Turkey has a structure of nuclear family (Özdemir, Vatandaş, Torlak, 2009).

**Table.4 scores of candidate teachers about McMaster Family Assessment Device sub-dimensions**

<b>Sub-dimensions Of McMaster Family Assessment Device</b>	$\bar{X}$	S
Problem Solving	1,79	,60
Communication	1,78	,51
Roller	1,95	,32
Affective Responsiveness	1,75	,57
Affective Involvement	2,24	,36
Behavior Control	2,07	,34
General Functions	1,57	,48

FAD consists of items each of whom belongs to one of 7 sub-dimensions and determines functions some of whom are healthy and some of whom are unhealthy. *Problem Solving* sub-dimension aims to collect data about skills of solving materialistic and psychological problems as the level in which families can fulfill their functions; *Communication* sub-dimension aims to collect data about whether the family have an effective communication or not; *Roller* sub-dimension aims to collect data about sharing works and whether they are fulfilled by responsibility; *Affective Responsiveness* sub-dimension aims to collect data about whether the family response against any stimulus or not; *Affective Involvement* sub-dimension aims to collect data about the degree of interest, care and love that family members show one another; *Behavior Control* sub-dimension aims to collect data about understanding of indication of setting borders to the behaves of the family members and style of having authority; *General Functions* sub-dimension aims to collect data as it includes other six sub-dimension about the existence of effective communication in the family, responsibility feelings of family members to each other, sharing happiness and sadness in the family, and being sensitive to each other in such cases (Karaveli, 2000).

According to the answer alternatives category, the score (1.00) symbolizes healthy answer and the score (4.00) symbolizes unhealthy answer. The scores change between 1.00 (healthy) and 4.00 (unhealthy). As the most unhealthy score is “4.00”, the score “2.00” was determined as a score that distinguishes healthy and unhealthy functions. As it is seen Table 4, the score means of the candidate teachers about sub-dimensions of FAD change between 1.57 and 2.24. In this sense, generally, Problem Solving, Communication, Roller, Affective Responsiveness, and General Functions are seen as healthy; Affective Involvement and Behavior Control sub-dimensions are seen at the border. Affective Involvement sub-dimension includes interest, care, and love of to each other. The healthiest families interested in each other at mid-level. Families who are interested in each other less or more mean that they do not fulfill their functions adequately. Being more interested in each other is the indicator that they are loyal to each other, on the other hand being interested in each other is the indicator that they show less love and interest to each other. Behavior Control is a style in which the family make standard to the behaviors of family members and providing discipline. In this sub-dimension, flexibility, strictness, freedom, and irregularity of control are handled. Flexible behavior control is the indicator of healthy family and chaotic behavior control is the

indicator of unhealthy family functions. In this sense means make us to think that the students have some problems in these two sub-dimensions.

**Table 5. Sub-dimensions of McMaster Family Assessment Device**

		Problem Solving	Communication	Roller	Affective Responsiveness	Affective Involvement	Behavior Control
Problem Solving	Pearson	1	.657	.554	.528	.128	.341
	Sig.		.000	.000	.000	.145	.000
	N	131	131	131	131	131	131
Commun.	Pearson	.657	1	.502	.649	.205	.293
	Sig.	.000		.000	.000	.019	.001
	N	131	131	131	131	131	131
Roller	Pearson	.554	.502	1	.432	.355	.295
	Sig.	.000	.000		.000	.000	.001
	N	131	131	131	131	131	131
Affective Respons.	Pearson	.528	.649	.432	1	.391	.268
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000		.000	.002
	N	131	131	131	131	131	131
Affective Involv.	Pearson	.128	.205	.355	.391	1	.113
	Sig.	.145	.019	.000	.000		.199
	N	131	131	131	131	131	131
Behavior Control	Pearson	.341	.293	.295	.268	.113	1
	Sig.	.000	.001	.001	.002	.199	
	N	131	131	131	131	131	131

**p < 0.05**

In order to compare means of sub-dimensions of McMaster Family Assessment Device, Pearson Moment Correlation analysis was applied. High level of meaningfulness was determined among sub-scales except Behavior Control and Affective Involvement, Problem Solving and Affective Involvement. Having high level of meaningful correlation among sub-dimensions of the scale is important for showing internal validity of the scale.

Family perception of the students was analyzed relationally in terms of gender, parental education level and family structure variables. When we look at the relation between sub-dimensions of FAD and independent variables, meaningful difference was not found according to t test analysis. This situation expresses that family functions of the candidate teachers who participated in the research do not show important changes according to demographic characteristics.

## Results and Discussion

In general, findings in the studies in which family functions were assessed are like these: in healthy families, roles are harmonious, there are common aims and values, they look for suitable solutions, there are acceptance and respect in the family, there is a flexible authority structure, family members are close to each other and independent, relations are continuous, there is adaptation to the changes, authority is shared by couples, members achievements are assessed in the family environment. On the other hand, in unhealthy families, it was seen that communication function is broken, communication is up to some rules,

interpersonal relations are cut, some roles are given to the people by force, real solutions to the problems are not looked for, family members are not in a close relation, in general they have negative emotions (Dönmezer, 2009, Bulut, 1990; cited, Mete, 2005). When assessed generally, it can be said that the structure of family relations are the important indicator of whether the family fulfills its functions healthily or not. It is stated that some variables such as cooperation of couples, expression of emotions, family conflicts, agreement of the couples in child care and sexual life, socio economic level and education level influence family relations and their collaboration level. Studies in which family functions are analyzed in the literature shows that family functions such as problem solving, communication, roller, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, behavior control in family relations are affected by some factors such as parents' education level, age, family structure (nuclear, wide, etc.) the age of marriage and chronic disease (Duyan, 2000; cited, Özatça, 2009).

Learning perception of the university students towards their families was aimed in this study. Perceptions of the students in the context of sub-dimensions of FAD were analyzed as descriptive in terms of gender, parental education level and family structure. When parental education levels of the students were analyzed it is seen that majority of the mothers are primary school graduate and according to the ratio order, high school and university follows them. And it is seen that majority of the fathers are university graduates. Some studies in the literature show that parental education level is among the factors that affect the quality of family functions (Yılmaz 2001, Ertem and Yazıcı 2006, Balkaya and Ceyhan, 2007, Ereş 2009). In this sense in table 2, there is a distinctive differentiation in the education level of father and mother. Moreover, 92.4% of the candidate teachers indicate that grandfather or grandmother who is the member of wide family does not live in their families, on the other hand 7.6% of them indicate that one of the members of wide family, grandfather or grandmother, lives within their families. The families of the students in this research group are the members of nuclear family with high ratio (%92.4). According to a research that was held in 2006, the majority (80.7%) of the families in Turkey has a structure of nuclear family (Özdemir, Vatandaş, Torlak, 2009). It is emphasized in literature that number of family members as a factor that has effect on the quality of family relations has a negative effects in the sub-dimensions such as communication, affective responsiveness, affective involvement and roller (Devinney 1992). When the sub-dimensions of FAD are compared, high level of meaningfulness was determined among sub-scales except Behavior Control and Affective Involvement, Problem Solving and Affective Involvement. When the perception of the students were analyzed as relational in terms of variables of gender, parental education level, and family structure, meaningful differentiation was not found between sub-dimensions of FAD and these variables in their studies in the literature, Offer, Ostrov, Howard, (1982), Devinney (1992), Fincham, (1998), Wilhelm, Boyce, Brownhill, (2000), Salkind (2001), Ertem and Yazıcı (2006), Henry et al, (2006), Balkaya and Ceyhan (2007), Urdan, Solek, Schoenfelder (2007), Ereş (2009), determined that attitudes of parents, the quality of family relations, educational and demographical characteristics of parents, cultural effects and structure of family have an important influence on the family.

As a result both the finding of this research and researches in the literature show that positive effective communication and attitude of parents affect development and quality of family functions on adolescents and university students. Therefore, generalization of parental education programs, increasing seminars on family communication, organizing meetings in which students come together and discuss family problems are required in order to perform family functions healthily and increase the quality of family communication. Being teenagers who have healthy family functions of candidate pre-school teachers is a determining factor on the positive relations that they set with their students and the relations that they set with the families of their students. Therefore, it is important for pre-school teacher candidates to get trained continue it both before graduation and during in-service process about family dynamics.

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