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# The Effect of Fathers' Meet-up Training on the Perception of Fatherhood Role of Fathers with Preschool Children

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of fathers' perceptions of fatherhood through online meetings with fathers who have preschool children between 3-6 years of age. A total of 42 fathers (21 fathers in the experimental group and 21 fathers in the control group) took part in the study. The research design with a pretest and posttest control group was used in the research. The "Fatherhood Role Perception Scale" developed by Kuzucu (1999) was used for data collection. Within the scope of the research, online fathers meet-up training was held for the experimental group once a week throughout 11 weeks. The data were analysed using the Mann Whitney U and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test (nonparametric tests). According to the data obtained in the research, it was concluded that the online fathers' meet-up training was significantly effective on fathers' perceptions of the fatherhood role. The study's findings were discussed, and suggestions were listed for future studies in the relevant literature.

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Keywords:

Fathers' meet-up training, online education, fatherhood role perception, preschool

## 1. Introduction

Family is a social system consisting of adult parents and children where parents responsible for the care of children share emotional, social, and economic responsibilities, and members can feel belonging (Hetherington, Parke, Guavin & Locke, 2006). In terms of children, the family is the only institution where multi-directional development occurs (Güler Yıldız, 2020). Especially in the early childhood period, the most important people around the child are their mothers and fathers. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the microsystem layer in which the child is at the centre consists of individuals who directly interact with the child, such as the mother, father, teachers, and friends. Stating that the microsystem has the most impact on the child's life, Bronfenbrenner points out that mothers and fathers are the people who have a relatively greater influence on the development of the child. However, he also mentions the effect of other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). The healthy steps were taken by parents who meet almost all the developmental needs of the individual, who is a biopsychosocial entity, in the early childhood period positively affect many aspects of the child's life.

The multidimensional development of the children begins with the family in which they were born. The family plays a vital role in the child's developmental areas, such as physical, cognitive, language, and moral development (Chiu & Chow, 2015). It is important to develop the knowledge and skills of parents, who have important effects on the child's life, on issues such as parenting, child care, and child education. (Tezel Şahin & Özbey, 2007). In addition, with rapid and great developments in today's world, the family structure has also changed. Some differentiations have been inevitable in the roles and duties assigned to the parents. Scientific

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and technological developments have made the role of parents in children's lives more evident. Therefore, various family education programs are implemented for various age groups and families with different characteristics worldwide and in our country (Cheng, 2004; Gunderson, 2004; Kaymak Özmen, 2013; Magill-Evans et al., 2007; Östberg, 2005; Özel & Zelyurt, 2016).

While emphasising the importance of parents in the preschool child's life, the mother-child relationship was generally mentioned, and studies mostly focused on this relationship (Driscoll & Pianta, 2011; Konchaska et al., 2005; Saygı, 2011; Topçu Bilir & Sop, 2016). In studies investigating the role sharing of parents in the care of their children, it was observed that mothers were generally more interested in caring for their children. At the same time, fathers took on responsibilities such as meeting the family's financial needs and protecting the family, resulting in them spending less time with their children than their mothers (Hossain et al., 2007). However, the strong and warm father-child relationship established at an early age positively affects children's social behaviour and decreases the possibility of having behavioural problems (Gültekin Akduman & Türkoğlu, 2015; Webster et al., 2013). It is stated that children with a strong father-child relationship have better friendship relations, their leadership skills are more developed, and their self-esteem becomes stronger (Bloom, 1997).

The healthy father-child relationship established since the child's infancy has an important place in the healthy development of the child (Çağdaş & Seçer, 2005; Tatlı & Aksoy, 2019). Especially in the early childhood period, the father is at least as vital as the mother. How much and how the father is involved in the child's life and his relationship with his child is related to the father's perception of fatherhood (Gültekin Akduman & Türkoğlu, 2015). The paternal role refers to how the father assumes this role as a parent; social expectations and the meaning given to this role also influence their perception (Rustia & Abbott, 1990). Fatherhood, which is affected by individual and social perception, affects how individuals understand this role and their behaviour. Modern fatherhood behaviours that meet our age requirements include effective communication with the child and active participation in the child's development with the mother (Harris & Morgan, 1991). It is known that the healthy bonds that the father will build with the child at an early age are effective in the child's cognitive, social, emotional, and personality development (Forehand, Wierson, Thomas & Armistead, 1990).

Many factors affect the paternal role. According to Kuzucu (2011), fathers' perceptions of fatherhood, gender role attitude, masculinity, psychological status, educational status, income status, occupation, number of children, family type, and whether they want to be a father are affected by the roles that the culture imposes on the father. A study conducted with fathers with preschool children concluded that the perception of fatherhood was affected by fathers' education, employment status, occupation, number of children, age at first fatherhood, and obtaining information about fatherhood (Telli ve Özkan, 2016). How a man perceives himself as a father and how close he feels to this role directly affects his involvement in childcare and his relationship with the child (Doherty et al., 1998; Levy Shiff & Israelashvili, 1988). Aksoy and Tatlı (2019) examined fathers' relationships with their preschool children and their perceptions of fatherhood. There was a significant relationship between fathers' perceptions of the paternal role and the positive father-child relationship.

Especially in early childhood, the most important people in a child's life are undoubtedly their parents. The parents' knowledge deficiencies about the child's various developmental areas create difficulties in understanding their children and adapting to their development (Şalçı, 2020; Wright, Stegelin & Harfle, 2007). With modernisation and the more involvement of women in business life, there are observable changes in family structures. Thus, the equal responsibility of men and women in the child's upbringing has necessarily changed the fatherhood role. This change has created the need to take all responsibility away from the mother and share it equally. For these reasons, it is important to plan family education activities for mothers and fathers, and they should especially be carried out according to the fathers' different needs (Tezel Şahin & Özbey, 2007). Kakaliçoğlu (2019) investigated fatherhood experiences in the context of changing social roles in modern society and concluded that fathers need parenting education. It was stated that fathers especially needed parenting education regarding child development, childcare, and changing fatherhood roles.

Fathers' meet-up training is adapted by the Mother-Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) to implement the father support program online. This training, which can be carried out by the practitioners of the father education program, consists of online training held once a week throughout 11 weeks. Materials prepared by AÇEV for use in online education are delivered to participants. In parallel with the achievements in the father's

education program, Fathers' Meet-up Training includes goals such as realising the importance of the father's role in the child's development, being informed about the child's development stages, actively participating in the care of the children, and having realistic expectations regarding the development of the child.

In the light of all this information, the answer of "Does online fathers' meet-up training for fathers with children aged 3-6 affect fathers' perceptions about the fatherhood role?" question was investigated. As a result of this study, it is expected that the perceptions of the fatherhood role of fathers participating in the fathers' meet-up training will increase. The hypotheses of the research are listed as follows:

- 1) Fathers' perceptions about fatherhood and posttest score distributions of fathers who received Online Fathers' Meet-up Training are significantly higher than fathers who did not receive this education.
- 2) Fathers' perceptions about their role and posttest score distributions of fathers who received Fathers' Meet-up Training are higher than pretest score distributions.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research Model

This study used a quantitative research method to examine the effect of Online Father's Meet-up Training, developed by AÇEV, on the perception of the fatherhood role. Moreover, quasi-experimental methods (pretest-posttest and follow-up test) were used in the control group research design. The participants were grouped into two by random sampling (experimental and control groups). Random sampling was used on two groups by matching them in terms of demographic characteristics from the sample pool (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020). In this design, the causes of some events or the relationships between some situations are examined. The main purpose is to reveal the causality and test the cause-effect relationships of the change on the independent and dependent variables. The internal validity of these studies is also strong (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020; Hocoğlu & Akkaş Baysal, 2019). The pretest scores of the dependent variable at the beginning of the experiment were measured for the experimental and control groups in the pretest-posttest and the follow-up test control group design. Then, the independent variable is only applied to the experimental group. As a result of the experimental process, posttest measurements of the dependent variable are made for both groups, and by comparing the groups, it is decided whether the experimental process is effective. The follow-up measurement is applied to the experimental group to see the effectiveness of the process (Büyüköztürk, 2001).

### 2.2. Experimental grup

The participants were determined using convenience sampling (a non-random sampling method). This study considered the voluntariness of the fathers, and the sampling process was ensured to be continued until completed, starting from the schools that could be reached easily (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020; Creswell, 2012). The research study group consists of 42 fathers who have children attending different kindergartens of Afyon Kocatepe Primary School located in the centre of Afyonkarahisar. 150 voluntary fathers who live in the central district of Afyonkarahisar, having children between the ages of 3-6, and continuing their education in schools where fathers' meetings were introduced, were included in the sample. 42 fathers among the voluntary fathers available to participate in each meeting were selected as the sample since the training required voluntary participation aimed at adults. These fathers, selected for various demographic characteristics, were matched in pairs and randomly assigned to the groups (21 fathers in experimental and 21 in the control group). Roscoe (1975) stated that a small sample group of 10-20 could produce a successful result in well-structured experimental studies (Cited in Büyüköztürk et al., 2020).

There were 6 middle school, 7 high school, and 8 university graduate fathers in the experimental group. 5 of the fathers in the control group graduated from secondary school, 8 graduated from high school, and 8 graduated from university. All 42 participants are employed. While 4 of the participants in the experimental group were civil servants and 17 of them were private-sector employees; 3 of the fathers in the control group were civil servants, and 18 of them were private-sector employees. 3 of the fathers in the experimental group had one child, 10 had two children, and 8 had three children or more. In the control group, 4 had one child, 11 had two children, and 6 had three children or more. The mean age of the fathers in the experimental group was 37.

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools and Procedure

**Fatherhood Role Perception Scale (FRPS):** The Fatherhood Perception Scale was developed by Kuzucu (1999) to measure fathers' perceptions of fatherhood. The scale, consisting of 5-point Likert-type and 25 items, can be applied individually and in groups. Positive items on the scale are scored from 1 to 5, and negative items from 5 to 1. A high score on the scale means positive paternal role perceptions, and a low score means negative paternal role perceptions. The scale reliability was checked with the test-retest method, found at the  $r = 0.60$  ( $p < .05$ ) level, and there was a significant relationship. As a reliability study, the scale's internal consistency was also checked, and the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was calculated as .75 (Kuzucu, 1999).

**Content of Fathers' Meet-up Training:** Fathers' meet-up training is an 11-week online training program for fathers with children aged 3-6, one day a week, each session lasting two hours (açev, 2020). açev created the program contents and the training process of this research by adapting the father support program to the online application. this online application was preferred during the covid-19 epidemic when face-to-face training was limited. açev prepared educational contents, mother, father, children's activities, various play equipment, and storybooks and sent them to the addresses of fathers who will participate in the training. these materials were also actively used in the training process.

The topics in Table 2 below were included in the father's meet-up training throughout 11 weeks. The homework assignments agreed with the fathers following the week's topic were used throughout the education process. Additionally, homework sharing was before sessions, and evaluation activities related to the session were carried out at the end. In the first session, a meeting event was held with the fathers who participated in the training. After the meeting was over, the fathers' expectations regarding the training to be carried out were discussed. Expectations that could be realised were clarified, and explanations were made on unrealisable expectations. Furthermore, information about the training process and sessions was given. Group rules were created with the fathers who attended the training so the education could proceed healthily during the continuation of the session. Their parenting experiences during the pandemic period were discussed, and the problems experienced were shared. The first session ended by sharing thoughts and feelings based on the session. The second session focused on the importance of the father for the child. A group discussion was held on the importance of the methods used in raising children. The difficult and the favourable aspects of being a father were discussed with a brainstorm. The session was evaluated by mentioning the importance of the father in the child's life and the importance of child-rearing methods. The second session ended with homework. In the third session, children's rights issues were discussed with the fathers through group discussions and question-answers. The important topics regarding children's rights were shared. Negligence and abusive behaviours were discussed and exemplified. The topics of family attitudes were shared. The relationship between family attitudes and children's rights was established. The characteristics of the democratic attitude in the context of children's rights were explained. Providing a discussion environment about family attitudes aimed to raise awareness about attitudes. The session was concluded with an evaluation activity. In the fourth session, the subjects of communication styles such as active listening, communication barriers, and self-expression skills were presented with the help of a question-answer session, case study, and group discussion methods. In the fifth session, the democratic relationship and empathy issue started with the warm-up activity. Empathy, violence and its effects, and anger control issues were discussed using the methods of discussion, question and answer, brainstorming, and in the light of scientific knowledge, incomplete and erroneous information on the subject was emphasised. In the sixth session, developing positive behaviours (e.g. setting an example, setting limits and rules, giving feedback) and issues of reducing negative behaviours (finding the reason, offering options, etc.) were discussed through interactive and case study methods suitable for group interactions. In the seventh session, under the social and emotional development title, socialisation processes, supporting social development, supporting emotional development, social rules, and internal control were explained using discussion, brainstorming, and question-answer methods. The eighth session started with a warm-up activity. Physical and sexual development issues were explained using various methods. In physical development, gross motor and fine motor activities were applied to the whole group with sample movements. A group discussion was held on activities that can support motor skills. By giving information about the sexual development process, approaches that could support sexual development were emphasised. The subject of how to answer questions about sexuality was explained, and sexual abuse was mentioned. A discussion environment was created on the subject, and

scientific information was presented afterwards. In the ninth session, activities such as mental development, supporting mental development, reading, games, and stories/fairy tales and the effects of new experiences on mental development were explained using the group discussion and case study methods. During the rest of the session, the meaning of success and what it means to be successful were discussed. The subjective aspect of success and the importance of success in different fields were mentioned. In the tenth session spending time with the child and play were explained through various methods. The importance of spending quality time was explained with the help of the brainstorming method. The importance of play in the child's life and the issues to be considered in choosing toys were discussed with group discussion and question-answer methods. In the following part of the session, the issue of technology use was mentioned. The session was ended by providing information about safe technology use and allowing fathers to express their thoughts on this issue. In the eleventh session, it was ensured that the participant fathers and the educator shared their feelings and thoughts about the education process. A PowerPoint slide was presented with photographs of the activities during the education. Finally, the training process was terminated by informing the participating fathers about continuing communication and interaction voluntarily.

**Table 1.** *Weekly Topics of Fathers' Meet-up Training*

Weeks	Contents	Weeks	Contents
1 <sup>st</sup>	Meeting/Expectations/Rules	6 <sup>th</sup>	Positive Attitudes
2 <sup>nd</sup>	The Role of the Father in Child's Life	7 <sup>th</sup>	Social and Emotional Development
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Family Attitudes	8 <sup>th</sup>	Physical and Sexual Development
4 <sup>th</sup>	Discussion and Question-Answer	9 <sup>th</sup>	Cognitive Development
5 <sup>th</sup>	Democratic Relationship and Empathy	10 <sup>th</sup>	Spending Time with Children and Games
		11 <sup>th</sup>	Final Meet-up

#### 2.4. Experimental Process and Data Collection Process

Fathers' Meet-up Training, prepared by the Mother-Child Education Foundation (AÇEV), was carried out with fathers who volunteered to participate in the training and had children attending preschool institutions affiliated with the Afyonkarahisar province. Since face-to-face education was subject to various restrictions during the pandemic, Fathers' Meet-up Training was held online for 11 weeks. The introductory meeting invitations of the education were sent to the fathers of the students by preschool institutions. The training was carried out online via the zoom application. The introductory meeting was planned for different dates for each school. Among the fathers who attended the meetings, 42 volunteer fathers participated in the study. These fathers were matched and assigned to the groups randomly (experimental and control). Information about the study was given to the control group, and it was stated that the same training would be given to them in the next period if they wanted.

The 21 fathers who were trained continued without interruption for 11 weeks. Before starting the training, a pretest application prepared on Google forms was applied to the experimental and control groups. The Fatherhood Role Perception Scale was used as a pretest. After the training given to fathers, the Fatherhood Role Perception Scale was applied as a posttest to all fathers in the two groups. Training took place between November 2020 and January 2021. Eight weeks after the training, the Fatherhood Role Perception Scale was administered to the experimental group in April 2021 as a follow-up test.

Explaining the independent change variables of research with independent variables is called internal validity (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020). In the present study, some factors might threaten the internal validity of explaining the change in fathers' perceptions of the paternal role, the dependent variable, with the independent variable, fathers' meeting training. The factors that might threaten internal validity were examined by Büyüköztürk et al. (2020) under the following headings; the selection of the participants, the maturity of the participants, the data collection tool, the background of the participants, the effect of the participant loss, the pretest effect, the statistical regression, the interaction effect, the effect of expectations, and the effect of external variables (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020). Regarding these factors that pose a threat to internal validity, the following points were noted in this study. Forty-two fathers, matched according to various demographic characteristics, were assigned to the experimental and control groups. The matching and assigning control groups contributed to the elimination of the maturation effect as much as possible. In addition, attention was paid to select the

participant that had not participated in a similar educational experience before. Furthermore, thanks to distance education, the experimental and control group fathers would not interact with the pandemic conditions. The researcher carried out this process to eliminate the threat of the data collection process to internal validity. It is estimated that the pretest effect will also be eliminated, considering the training process takes about 3 months.

**2.5. Data Analysis**

Within the scope of this research, SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 24.0 analysed the pretest, posttest, and follow-up test data applied to the two groups. Since the sample size is less than 30, nonparametric tests were used while analysing the data (Büyüköztürk, 2010). The data obtained in the study were analysed with nonparametric statistical methods since the groups consisted of 21 people. The Fatherhood Role Perception Scale data between the experimental and control groups were analysed using the Mann-Whitney U test (this test determines whether the scores obtained from two unrelated samples differ significantly from each other) (Büyüköztürk, 2010). The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used to analyse the in-group changes of the experimental and control groups on the Fatherhood Role Perception Scale. It is used to compare data obtained from measurements obtained at different times from the same sample group (Büyüköztürk, 2010).

**2.6. Ethical**

Permission from the ethics committee of Kocaeli University and institutional permission from Afyonkarahisar Provincial Directorate of National Education was obtained to conduct the research.

**3. Findings**

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the effect of Fathers Meet-up Training on participants' perception of fatherhood, which is applied to fathers with children attending preschool education. For this purpose, the pilot of the research was tested, and the findings were evaluated. Before the findings of the hypotheses, Mann Whitney U-test results regarding the pretest scores of the two groups from the Fatherhood Role Perception Scale are presented in Table 2 below. Descriptive statistics of the FRPS pretest, posttest, and follow-up scores of the fathers in the groups are presented in Table 3 below.

**Table 2.** Mann Whitney U-Test Results Regarding Pretest Scores of Experiment and Control Groups from FRPS

Groups	n	X	SD	Mean Rank	Total Rank	u	z	p
Experimental	21	104.42	8.10	23,93	502,5	169,5	-1,285	0,199*
Control	21	100.14	9.66	19,07	400,5			

There was no significant difference between the two groups FRPS pretest mean scores (Table 2 above). It can be concluded that the fatherhood role perceptions in the two groups were equivalent to each other.

**Table 3.** Pretest, Post-test and Follow-up Scores of FRPS and Standard Deviations of Experimental and Control Groups

Measures Groups	Pretest		Post-test		Follow-up	
	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD
Experimental (N=21)	104.42	8.10	110.33	7.59	108.52	7.43
Control (N=21)	100.14	9.66	100.38	9.16	100.21	9.47

In Table 3 above, it was observed that the mean FRPS pretest score ( $X = 104.42$ ) of the fathers in the experimental group increased in the posttest ( $X = 110.33$ ). In the follow-up test, the mean score of the experimental group decreased ( $X=108.52$ ). It was observed that there was almost no change in the pretest, posttest, and follow-up test scores of the control group.

The first hypothesis of the present study is "Fathers' perception of fatherhood posttest score distributions of fathers who received Fathers' Meet-up Training, and fathers who did not receive this training were significantly higher than the posttest score distributions". Table 4 below shows the findings related to this hypothesis.

**Table 4.** Mann Whitney U-Test Results Regarding the Posttest Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups from the FRPS

Groups	n	Mean Rank	Total Rank	u	z	p
Experimental	21	27.76	583.0	89.0	-3.313	0.001*
Control	21	15.24	320.0			

p<.05\*

The difference between posttest score distributions of the participating and non-participating fathers to the Fathers' Meet-up Training is significant at the level of .05 ( $Z = -3.313$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 4 above). According to the mean ranks, the experimental group participants have higher scores than those in the control group. This finding can be interpreted as the Fathers' Meet-up Training was effective on fathers' perception of fatherhood. This finding confirms the first research hypothesis.

The second hypothesis of the study is "The posttest scores of fathers who receive Fathers' Meet-up Training are higher than their pretest scores". In Table 5 below, the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group obtained from the Fatherhood Role Perception Scale are analysed using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test to identify any difference between them.

**Table 5.** Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results Regarding the Difference between Experimental Group Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

		N	Mean Rank	Total Rank	z	p
Pre-test Post-test Scores	Negative Rank	2	7.25	14.5	-3,241	0,001*
	Positive Rank	17	10.32	175.5		
	Equal	2				

\*Based on negative ranks

There is a 0.5 level significant difference between the pretest and posttest score distributions ( $Z = -3.241$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 5 above). An important difference is identified in the posttest positive ranks. According to the results, it can be concluded that Fathers' Meet-up Training (applied to fathers in the experimental group) effectively increases the perception of the fatherhood role.

**Table 6.** Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test Results Regarding the Difference between Experimental Group Post-Test and Follow-up Test Scores

		N	Total Rank	Mean Rank	z	p
Post-Test Follow-up Test Scores	Negative Rank	13	127.0	9.77	-1.811*	0,070
	Positive Rank	5	44.0	8.80		
	Equal	0				

\*Based on negative ranks

Eventually, the follow-up test was applied eight weeks after the application showed no significant difference between the posttest and follow-up test score distributions of the fathers who received Fathers' Meet-up Training, as stated in Table 6 above. Although the follow-up test means score ( $X = 108.52$ ) was lower than the posttest mean score ( $X = 110.33$ ), the difference between the follow-up test mean score and the posttest mean score was not significant. Additionally, the follow-up test means scores were higher than the pretest means scores. These two findings showed that the effect of Fathers' Meet-up Training on increasing the awareness of the fatherhood role continues even after eight weeks.

#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

This study researched the effect of online Father Meetings Training conducted with fathers with 3-6 years old children on their perceptions of fatherhood. The scores obtained from the "Father Role Perception Scale" administered as a pretest-posttest and follow-up test to fathers in the experimental and control groups were compared. Results identified no significant difference between the two groups before training. Then, the fathers in the experimental group were trained for eleven weeks, and at the end of the training, the posttest scores were calculated. The posttest scores showed that the participants' perceptions of fatherhood in the experimental group significantly increased. Although there was a decrease in the follow-up test compared to

the mean score obtained in the posttest, the difference between the follow-up and posttest mean scores were significant.

Studies in the relevant literature emphasise the effectiveness of the training programs for fathers. In a study (Alibeyoğlu, 2009) in which the father support program was applied, the program's effect on the child-rearing attitude was examined. It was found out that education had a significant impact on fathers' non-authoritarian attitudes. In a similar study, Mutlu (2018) concluded that the father training program was effective in all dimensions of family functions (e.g. problem-solving skills, communication skills, emotional responsiveness, paying attention, behaviour control, communication skills). In another study (Şalcı, 2020), the father support program was effective in fatherhood roles.

With the Fathers' Meetings Training implemented, fathers in the experimental group were trained on the father's role in the child's life, effective time with the child, active listening, empathy, and democratic relationship. These educations supported the perceptions of fathers about fatherhood roles. It can be said that this training applied to fathers creates a positive awareness with the increase in fathers' perception of the role of fatherhood. In their study, Telli and Özkan (2016) examined the factors affecting fatherhood and concluded that fathers' knowledge of fatherhood affected their perception of it. The relevant research findings stated that supporting fathers through various education would be necessary for a positive fatherhood role. Another study conducted by Uzun and Baran (2017) investigated the effect of training on fathers who had children in preschool regarding spending quality time with their children. After the ten-week father education program, it was observed that the quality time fathers spent with their children significantly increased. It could be concluded that father education programs positively changed fatherhood perceptions, enabling fathers to actively participate in the child's development and take responsibility for raising children.

The experimental group participants were informed that the democratic attitude would positively affect family relations in the present study. They were also told that it was the most effective attitude in the positive relationship with the child, within the scope of the family attitudes. Fathers attitudes towards children were determinant in the father-child relationship in the preschool period. The posttest results revealed that fathers have a positive attitude towards their children in parallel with the increasing score. A study by Taşkın and Erkan (2009) showed that the father education application applied to fathers with preschool and primary school children significantly increased fathers activities with their children (e.g. playing games with their children, establishing positive communication, and spending time outside). One of the essential points in parent education practices was that the training was more effective with parents who had younger-aged children (Heinrichs et al., 2002; Petermann, Helmsen & Koglin, 2010). Thus, it was essential to apply this study to fathers who had preschool children. Furthermore, it is known that with the increase in the time spent by fathers in business life, the duration and amount of their participation in studies for their children decrease (Marsiglio, 1991). For this reason, it is thought that online Fathers' Meet-up Training creates an opportunity for working fathers to participate compared to face-to-face training.

## **5. Recommendations**

An important result of the present study is that the applied Online Fathers' Meet-up Training effectively improved participants awareness of fatherhood. As Cinel and Şahin (2021) stated, it was important to carry out online and face-to-face studies to generalise these studies and develop fathers fatherhood roles who especially had children in preschool. From this point of view, it was thought that it was important to apply this training online in such a period when face-to-face studies were restricted because of the Covid-19 pandemic. On the other hand, it may be suggested to plan online and face-to-face education programs with preschool children to increase the impact that will arise from training programs for fathers. Furthermore, this study was carried out with fathers who have preschool children. Fathers with children in different age groups can also participate to analyse the study's results more comprehensively. Therefore, it is important to carry out the Fathers' Meet-up Training with the participation of more fathers. In this study, fathers' perceptions of fatherhood were examined. The effects of the Fathers' Meet-up Training program can also be investigated with other variables. The small sample size can be one of the limitations of the study. Another limitation is that no study was conducted on fathers in the control group. Different studies to be conducted with the control group could contribute to the comparison with the experimental group.

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