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CHILDREN'S PERCEPTION OF UNDERSTANDING MORAL RULESa

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## THE STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF MOTHER'S EDUCATION LEVEL AND GENDER ON CHILDREN'S PERCEPTION OF UNDERSTANDING MORAL RULES<sup>a</sup>

### ANNE EĞİTİM DÜZEYİNİN VE CİNSİYETİN ÇOCUKLARIN AHLAK KURAL BİLGİSİ ALGILARINA ETKİSİNİN İNCELENMESİ

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of the present study is to find out the effects of sub-social characteristics, mother's education level, the number of siblings and gender on 7-8 and 9 year-olds' (N=257) perception of understanding social and moral rules. The population forming the study is the students attending elementary schools of Directorate of National Education in the province of Konya during the academic year 2004-2005. Of these 257 students as the study sample, 89 students represented the city culture, 78 of them represented the town culture, and 90 of them represented the village culture. In order to determine children's perception of understanding moral and social rules, 'Perception of Understanding Moral and Social Rules Scale' (P.U.M.S.R.S), adapted from Smetana (1981) and developed by Nobes and Pawson (2003), is applied. According to the findings regarding children's Perception of Understanding Moral Rules, the mother's educational background is effective on children's Perception of Understanding Moral Rules (U.M.R) in terms of seriousness and alterability of rules sub-dimensions. Besides, socio-cultural level of students found to be effective only in sub-dimension of authority contingency. Moreover, influences of gender is found effective only in lack of rules sub-dimension considering the total score average. Considering the findings regarding children's Perception of Understanding Social Rules, the mother's educational background was significant in terms of the average score of those who were educated and illiterate regarding the alterability of rules sub-dimension. There were no significant differences in any of the sub-dimensions considering the number of siblings. All differences in the present study are discussed as significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level or greater.

**Keywords:** Perception, moral, social, elementary school

**ÖZET:** Bu araştırmanın amacı, ilköğretime devam eden 7-8 ve 9 yaş çocukların (N=257), sosyokültürel düzey, anne eğitim durumu, kardeş sayısı ve cinsiyetlerinin ahlaki kural bilgilerine etkisini incelemektir. Araştırmanın örneklem grubunu 2004–2005 öğretim yılında Konya İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü'ne bağlı ilköğretim okullarına devam eden öğrenciler oluştururken, örneklem grubunu, şehir kültürünü temsil eden 89 çocuk; kasaba kültürünü temsil eden 78 çocuk ve köy kültürünü temsil eden 90 çocuk olmak üzere toplam 257 çocuk oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada çocukların ahlaki ve sosyal kural bilgilerini belirlemek amacıyla Nobes ve Pawson'ın (2003) Smetana'dan (1981) alıp geliştirdiği Ahlak ve Sosyal Kural Bilgisi Algısı Ölçeğinin (ASKBAÖ) Ahlak Kural Bilgisi Algısı alt boyutu kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgulara göre annenin eğitim durumunun çocukların Ahlak Kural Bilgileri (A.K.B) üzerinde etkili olduğu sonucu elde edilmiştir. Cinsiyet değişkeninin, Ahlak Kural Bilgisi alt boyutlarından sadece Kural Yokluğu Algısı Ahlak Kural Bilgisi Puan Ortalamaları üzerinde etkili olduğu görülürken diğer alt boyutlarda etkili olmadığı saptanmıştır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Algı, ahlak, sosyal, ilköğretim

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## INTRODUCTION

The main features that distinguish human beings from other creatures are: thinking , judgment, expressing thoughts via language, having certain moral values and rules , and leading his relationship in accordance with these values or rules . Basically, moral values are determined by the cultural rules of the society lived in as well as the social rewards given in family relationship and communication, enforcements, parents' identifications or the roles imposed while playing with peers (İlgar, 1996). Child development experts define moral development as the learning of the rules that are necessary to keep pace with the social world (Ozeri, 2004) . In other words, moral development is the process of realizing the principles that allow children to evaluate specific behaviors as right or wrong and manage their own actions (Senemoğlu, 1997). During babyhood, the child does not have a conscious moral behavior. Towards primary school age, child learns that some behaviors are bad and some are good. A three-year-old boy can sense that, when he takes somebody else's toy without his knowledge it is theft. These kind of bad or wrong behaviors cannot be punished since the child at this age is not doing it deliberately (Aydın, 1997).

According to Erikson, during this period the child for the first time starts thinking about in a way that he can draw conclusions from his experiences. He is in continuous movement state--constantly doing something , creating and finding out. He spends a great amount of effort on this. If you ignore or reject these efforts, then the child believes that his work does not have value and begins to get a feeling of inferiority. It is not always the parents that cause child's feeling of inferiority--teachers and the life in school can also cause such a feeling (Geçtan, 1982). During this period, socioeconomic status, age and social status are essential features for children while picking their friends. One of the most fundamental tasks of socialization in all cultures is providing the developing child with environments of good behaviors in order to transfer social moral dimensions to the child. Although certain values that individuals have and some behaviors that he carries out differ from culture to culture, there is a system of rules in every society regarding its accuracy and inaccuracy. The child is expected to feel emotional discomfort or guilt when he violates these rules and he is expected to have emotional satisfaction when he follows them (Yazgan İnanç et al. , 2004). According to Hetherington and Parker (1993), the internal discipline in children for their own behavior develops through external social factors such as the presence of authority and fear of punishment. As the child grows, his behaviors are guided more and more by internal behavior criteria even in the absence of external limitations that will help him to have self-control. This change from external feelings to inner feelings and moral behaviors forming the basis of moral behaviors is called internalization. The majority of psychologists believe that internalization is the fundamental process in moral development.

According to Santrock (1993), the main factors affecting socialization are: being an only, middle or older child in the family, median or the older child, the number of siblings, gender, family size, the quality of the social experience that the household are involved in, welcoming guests and the way they are taken care of, the behavior that the child is asked to have around the guests, and the social, economic and cultural level of the family. Having an age gap among siblings or having same gender in all siblings can make it more difficult to socialize. Having the same sex in the family among siblings may make it difficult to establish a relationship with the opposite sex. The interaction within the family is not one-way. While children and adolescents are socialized by their parents, the parents are affected too. This "mutual socialization" process goes on with the continuing interaction between children and parents. Parenting roles in the family, attitudes towards marriage and adolescent attitudes are all formed through interactions within families. Child-rearing attitudes of parents is another variable that affects the child's socialization (Kulaksızoğlu , 2001).

In order to minimize the developmental differences among children coming from different families who are socio-economically disadvantaged, equality of opportunity must be provided in education (Yılmaz, 1991). A way of ensuring equality of educational opportunity is supporting these children's parents living in disadvantaged regions with further education. The traditional family structure is common in Turkey. It is observed that in these traditional family structures, the responsibility for the

care and education of children is given to mothers. It is a shared cultural opinion that the mother is the child's first and most important teacher. However, it is a known fact that one-third of the female population in Turkey is illiterate, and a large proportion of the ones who are not are primary school graduates who forget later due to lack of operationalizing literacy (Çagdas and Şahin Seçer, 2005).

Family can be considered as a stage upon which the relationships are exhibited. Children experience and observe all the complex aspects of human relationships on this stage. Positive qualities such as agreement, understanding, commitment and cooperation that are determining human relations are all gained at home. The kind of attitudes that are shown in negative situations such as disputes and conflicts are also learned at home. Even the strongest, most stable families may encounter situations throughout their lives that might challenge their welfare. One or more of the members in the household is enough to affect alignment of all members in the presence of a temporary or permanent illness or disability. Events totally rocking the family such as fire, flood, earthquake, and forced migration may have even more disastrous consequences. Situations such as; one or a few people leaving the house, temporarily or permanent absence of the father because of work, the separation of husband and wife or the divorce, the death of one of their parents or siblings are traumatic situations (Ocakcı, 2005).

When the region's development level, family income, education, and particularly women's education level increase, and rural-urban mobility increases, and finally when the number of children decrease in the family, the child's functionality as a family member who is contributing to family income loses its importance too. However, the result of overall modernization and development cannot be interpreted as the loss of all values in child. Because while child's economic value decreases, the child's psychological value increases (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1980).

A further difference between the villages - city organizations is psycho-social differentiation (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1988). These arise from moral, religious, aesthetic and family reasons. The town is one step between the two. It is more modern and flexible compared to a village but more traditional and conservative compared to a city (İnan, 1999). According to Kağıtçıbaşı (1982) boys are expected to be more independent, responsible, self-confident and free when compared with girls and girls are more exposed to external control than boys are. In her "family -human -culture" study, Kağıtçıbaşı (1980) stated that while the characteristics of rural areas were ranged as: spacious and functional family structure, resource extraction to parents, high fertility, low women status and financial expectations from children, these characteristics ranged as: more functional and complex family structure, financial extraction to child, low fertility, family bonds such as nuclear family and kinship in the city. Examining the literature many variables affecting children's moral rules are found. Besides, it is observed that there weren't many studies conducted in Turkey examining the relationship between these variables and perception of moral rules. So in the present study, the effect of low socio-cultural level, mother's education level, number of siblings, and gender on elementary school children's perception of moral rules was examined. In this respect, the answers to the following questions were sought:

**1.1.** Does the knowledge of children's perception of moral and social rules (seriousness, absence of authority, absence of rules, and alterability of rules, general moral and social rules) change in terms of mother's education level?

**1.2.** Does the knowledge of children's perception of moral and social rules (seriousness, absence of authority, absence of rules, and alterability of rules, general moral and social rules) change in terms of gender?

## **METHOD**

### **Research Model**

In the present study, the effect of independent variables on a dependent variable is investigated via

relational screening of screening model. The independent variables are low socio-cultural level, mother's education level, number of siblings, and gender. The dependent variable is the perception of knowledge of moral and social rules.

### Population and Sample

The population forming the study are the 7-8-9 year-old students attending city, town and village elementary schools of Directorate of National Education in the province of Konya during the academic year 2004-2005. The number of the students taken through random sampling method representing the city culture for 7 year-olds were 33 from the total number of 300, 8 year-olds were 33 taken from the total number of 420 and 9 year-olds were 33 from the total number of 480 studying in Mareşal Mustafa Kemal elementary school. The number of the students taken through random sampling method representing the town culture for 7 year-olds were 33 from the total number of 60, 8 year-olds were 33 taken from the total number of 72 and 9 year-olds were 33 from the total number of 84 studying in Sarayönü Central Elementary school. The number of the students taken through random sampling method representing the village culture for 7 year-olds were 19 from the total number of 38, 8 year-olds were 8 taken from the total number of 36 and 9 year-olds were 25 from the total number of 37 studying in Taşağıl Elementary school and from the two other villages called Şahören and Beykavağı Elementary schools all the 7-8-9 year-olds (total number of students in Şahören is 19) (total number of students in Beykavağı is 28). The total of 297 children and their mothers were included in the study sample. Some students were taken out from the study sample as they did not want to participate in the study and did not attend school on the application days of the measurement or were not willing to respond the questions asked regarding the pictures shown. In a few personal information forms some of the required information has been missing, so for these reasons, a total of 40 children were removed from the sample. Thus, this research was conducted with a total of 257 students.

### Data Collection

In order to determine children's perception of understanding moral and social rules, 'Perception of Understanding Moral and Social Rules Scale' adapted from Smetana (1981) and developed by Nobes and Pawson (2003), is applied. With the 'Perception of Understanding Moral and Social Rules Scale' by looking at the following criteria of seriousness, absence of authority, absence of rules, and alterability of rules the children's perception of moral rules have been measured. The scale consists of 10 photos measuring children's perception of moral rules. The scale has been applied previously to 4-9 year-old children by Nobes and Pawson. The implementation time of the scale changes from 20 to 30 minutes. Before starting the application, each child is taken individually to a quiet room in his/ her school and shown a few pictures. Related stories are told to test whether s/he understands the rule violations in these pictures or not. If the child understands these rule violations in the pictures then the questions in four different categories measuring their judgments and knowledge are asked.

Although the validity and reliability of Perception of Understanding Moral and Social Rules Scale has been done abroad, it has not been done in Turkey. Therefore, the scale has been presented to expert opinion. Experts in Turkey have expressed a positive opinion about the applicability of it in Turkey. After obtaining expert opinion, the scale is applied to 10 children every 10 days and the children's answers have shown consistency. Thus, it was not tested again on larger numbers of children and all these were evaluated as evidence for the validity and reliability of the scale. Four different facial expressions drawn on a single page were shown as the first question measuring the seriousness dimension of moral and social rules (A- 4 paper). Each child is informed about the pictures before shown. The first question regarding the perception of seriousness criteria has four distinct grading categories as approving, disapproving, fully disapproving and totally rejecting the behavior. Children selecting the first facial expression (approving) gets 1 point, children selecting the second (disapproving) gets 2 points, children selecting the third facial expression (fully disapproving) gets 3 points and the ones who select the fourth facial expression (totally rejecting) gets 4 points. To determine children's perception of the alterability of moral and social rules in the absence of authority and rules criteria two different choices of answer as right or wrong were presented. When the child

says right, s/he gets 0 points for the alterability of moral and social rules in the absence of authority and rules criteria, if s/he says wrong then s/he gets 1 point.

Perception of seriousness is the criterion for child's perception of whether s/he detects the seriousness of the rules or not. This reveals the child's judgment when violating the rules and shows which rule is more important to him or her. For example, considering the seriousness perception while child's answer for the picture showing "the child is taking the money that does not belong to him" is the 3rd or 4th facial expressions, the answer for the picture showing "child does not share cookies with a friend" was the 1st or 2nd facial expressions. The responses that the child gave for the pictures indicate that the child takes the thing happening in the 1st picture more serious. In order to measure child's authority perception, the child is asked the question "If nobody sees it, is it right or wrong?" So, right or wrong response to the question helps the researcher to measure whether following the rules is the result of authority presence or self internal audit. Perception of absence of rule criteria intends to measure whether the rule is still followed or not when it was not there. In order to measure child's commitment to the rule even when there was no rule like that, the following question is asked "If there was no rule like this would it be right or wrong to do so?" With the alterability of rules criteria, child's knowledge of changing rules is measured in terms of the rule given in the picture. For example, while children expressed that social rules can be changed considering time and place, they expressed that the possibility of changing moral rules was less (Nobes, Pawson, 2003; Smetana, Schlagman; Walsh Adams, 1993). In 2003 Nobes and Pawson used the scale in their study of 'Children's Understanding of Social Rules and Status'. However, in their study there are 8 more pictures related to a third dimension named as Adult - Child.

The present study is designed to measure child's moral and social rules so the photos related to the third dimension were not included. Conducting the questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes for each child. Children were interviewed individually during the practice. The stages that were taken into account while applying the scale are given as follows: Scale was implemented in a quiet classroom far away from any kind of disturbance that might distract them from participating in the study. Before starting the application, in order to make sure that the child's understanding is clear, two pictures were shown and four questions were asked to measure the following criteria; perception of seriousness, absence of authority, absence of rules, and alterability of rules. The application started only when the child was able to respond the sample pictures which were shown. When the child was not able to understand the pictures shown then they were simplified for the child by the researcher. At times when the child was distracted, s/he was told encouraging words such as: well done, very nice, great, you're very smart, you got the question quickly, etc. When the child was bored, a recess was taken then the application is continued again from where it stopped. The child did not get feedback when s/he answered wrongly and was told that it was not a quiz or competition when s/he asked how many points s/he got from the application. While children were being informed about the pictures, such as the picture about "child's taking the money on the desk" is explained as "the child is taking the money that doesn't belong to him/her" instead of using the word "theft." However, when it is still not understood then in order to make her/him to understand the picture was re-told as "the child is stealing money". The necessary time that child needed to answer the question was given and in the case of no response, the researcher skipped that question and asked the next one.

Then, they returned to the question which was not answered before and the child is asked again. Since the application took place in a classroom environment four facial expressions related to the first question in terms of perception of seriousness were drawn on the board. Other pictures used to assess children's knowledge of moral and social rules were colored to make the children enjoy looking at them during the application.

## **Data Analysis**

In order to find out whether the knowledge of moral rules differ according to mother's education level and gender variables, the technique of variance analysis is used. In the analysis of the data significance level was determined as 0.05.

## FINDINGS

**Table 1. The  $\bar{X}$ , S and n Values for Children's Knowledge of Moral Rules Regarding Mother's Education Level**

Mother's Education													
		Mean Scores for Seriousness Perception				Mean Scores for Absence of Authority		Mean Scores for Absence of Rules		Mean Scores for Alterability of Rules		Total Mean Scores for Perception of Moral Rules	
Education Level		N	$\bar{X}$	S	$\bar{X}$	S	$\bar{X}$	S	$\bar{X}$	S	$\bar{X}$	S	
Mother's Education	College	39	<b>34,69</b> <b>AB</b>	5,26	9,94	0,22	6,76	4,08	<b>9,74</b> <b>A</b>	0,91	<b>61,15</b> <b>AB</b>	7,49	
	High School	46	<b>32,15</b> <b>B</b>	5,74	9,63	1,06	6,43	3,70	<b>8,84</b> <b>A</b>	1,66	<b>57,08</b> <b>BC</b>	6,90	
	Secondary School	13	<b>36,15</b> <b>A</b>	4,12	9,92	0,64	6,84	4,63	<b>9,84</b> <b>A</b>	0,55	<b>62,76</b> <b>A</b>	6,32	
	Primary School	149	<b>33,79</b> <b>AB</b>	5,03	9,20	1,91	7,83	3,02	<b>8,91</b> <b>A</b>	2,18	<b>59,76</b> <b>AB</b>	9,32 7	
	Illiterate	10	<b>32,80</b> <b>AB</b>	4,66	7,50	2,59	5,70	3,09	<b>7,40</b> <b>B</b>	2,71	<b>53,40</b> <b>C</b>	0,15	

\*The difference between the mean scores of the same variable shown with different letters is statistically meaningful ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Considering the results on Table 1 the score average for knowledge of Moral Rules regarding seriousness perception reveals that mother's education level is effective on children's average scores of seriousness perception which shows that when secondary school graduate mother's children's scores ( $X=36.15$ ) and high school graduate mother's children's scores ( $X=32.15$ ) are compared in terms of Seriousness Perception criterion, there was a significant difference in favor of secondary school graduate mother's children. For mean scores of Knowledge of Moral Rules regarding the alterability of rules criterion; the highest scores were of those whose mother's were secondary school graduates ( $X=9.84$ ) and the lowest scores were of those whose mother's had no education ( $X=7.40$ ). According to the Total Mean Score of Knowledge of Moral Rules; children whose mothers' were primary school ( $X=59.76$ ), secondary school ( $X=62.76$ ), high school ( $X=57.08$ ) and college graduates ( $X=61.15$ ) got higher scores than those having no education ( $X = 53.40$ ). According to these results, while mother's education level had no effect on children's mean scores of Knowledge of Moral Rules at the 0.05 level in terms of Absence of Authority and Absence of Rules criteria, it statistically had great effect at 0.05 level on children's perception of seriousness, perception of alterability of rules criteria and total mean scores of Knowledge of Moral Rules.

Table 2. The  $\bar{X}$ , S and n Values for Children's Knowledge of Moral Rules Regarding Gender

Table 2: The X̄, S and N Values for Children's Knowledge of Moral Rules Regarding Gender												
Gender		Mean Scores for Seriousness Perception			Mean Scores for Absence of Authority		Mean Scores for Absence of Rules		Mean Scores for Alterability of Rules		Total Mean Scores for Perception of Moral Rules	
		N	X̄	S	X̄	S	X̄	S	X̄	S	X̄	S
	Girl	29	33,72	5,49	9,49	1,54	7,82 B	3,14	9,08	1,98	60,13	8,52
	Boy	28	33,71	4,91	9,23	1,79	6,75 A	3,68	8,95	1,96	58,66	8,88

\*The difference between the mean scores of the same variable shown with different letters is statistically meaningful ( $p < 0.05$ ).

According to gender variable the mean scores in Table 2 shows that gender was not statistically meaningful in any of the criteria but of absence of rules. The mean score for girls were ( $X=7,82$ ) and the mean scores for boys' were ( $X=6,75$ ) showing that girls pay more attention to moral rules than boys do.

Table 3. Variance Table of KT, sd, KO and F Values for Children's Knowledge of Moral Rules In Terms of Mother's Education Level and Gender Variables

Variable	Source of Variance	Sd	KT	K O	F	P
Mean Scores for Seriousness Perception	Education Level	4	283,29	70,82	2,65	<b>0,034</b>
	Gender	1	1,25	1,25	0,05	0,829
	Error	246	6570,99	26,71		
Mean Scores for Absence of Authority	Education Level	4	20,542	5,135	2,05	0,088
	Gender	1	6,851	6,851	2,74	0,099
	Error	246	615,548	2,502		
Mean Scores for Absence of Rules	Education Level	4	88,49	22,12	1,95	0,104
	Gender	1	69,83	69,83	6,14	<b>0,014</b>
	Error	246	2797,42	11,37		
Mean Scores for Alterability of Rules	Education Level	4	37,462	9,365	2,53	<b>0,041</b>
	Gender	1	1,959	1,959	0,53	0,468
	Error	246	912,430	3,709		
Total Mean Scores for Perception of Moral Rules	Education Level	4	869,13	217,28	2,93	<b>0,022</b>
	Gender	1	176,17	176,17	2,38	0,125
	Error	246	18247,65	74,18		

When the F values in Table 3 are examined in terms of gender, the F values for each criterion were accordingly; seriousness criterion the F value was 0.05, absence of authority the F value was 2.74, alterability of rules the F value was 0.53 and total mean score the F value was 2.38 which means that the difference was not statistically significant in any of these four sub-dimensions at 0.05 level. However, for absence of rules the F value was 0.53 showing that the absence of rules perceived differently by girls and boys.

## DISCUSSION



In the present study whether the knowledge of moral rules differ according to mother's education level and gender variables in terms of seriousness perception, absence of authority, absence of rules, alterability of rules and Total Mean Scores for perception of Moral Rules is examined. According to the data gathered considering absence of authority criterion there were no meaningful differences and the scores ranked from top to low as college graduate mothers' children, secondary school graduate mothers' children, high school graduate mothers' children, primary school graduate mothers' children and those whose mothers' had no education at all. When scores were examined in terms of absence of rules, the mean scores have shown no statistical difference. According to mother's education level, children's scores ranked from highest to lowest: primary school, secondary school, college, high school and lastly illiterate as the lowest. This result is not consistent with the second hypothesis of this research. According to Adler, children between the ages 7-10 start to understand both the meaning and purpose of the rules and adhere strictly. According to Piaget, children at this age obey the rules that they encounter without questioning them (An et.al., 1998).

According to mother's education level children's mean scores regarding seriousness perception criterion were statistically meaningful. The scores ranked accordingly: secondary school graduate mothers' children ( $X=36,15$ ), college graduate mothers' children ( $X=34,69$ ), primary school graduate mothers' children ( $X=33,79$ ), illiterate mothers' children ( $X=32,80$ ) and high school graduate mothers' children ( $X=32,15$ ). Considering mother's education level, children's mean scores regarding alterability of rules were statistically meaningful and ranked as secondary school graduate mothers' children ( $X=9,84$ ), college graduate mothers' children ( $X=9,74$ ), primary school graduate mothers' children ( $X=8,91$ ), high school graduate mothers' children ( $X=8,84$ ) and illiterate mothers' children ( $X=7,40$ ). When Total Mean Scores for perception of Moral Rules is examined in terms of mother's education level, the difference was statistically meaningful. The scores ranked as secondary school graduate mothers' children ( $X=62,76$ ), college graduate mothers' children ( $X=61,15$ ), primary school graduate mothers' children ( $X=59,76$ ), high school graduate mothers' children ( $X=57,08$ ) and illiterate mothers' children ( $X=53,40$ ). Considering the results of the present study, it is found that there is a relation between children's scores and mother's educational level regarding seriousness perception, alterability of rules and Total Mean Scores for perception of Moral Rules but the relation is related with "mothers having education and having no education at all".

E. Johnson and McGillicuddy - DeLisi (1983) stated in their study that socio-economic status and mother's education level are the key factors affecting children's conscience of distinguishing rules and conventions. According to social domain theory, children learn social knowledge including moral values from their relations with their elders (parent, teacher etc.), peers and siblings (Smetana, 1999). Considering various studies conducted on children's conscience and moral development, it is found that children who are frequently exposed to a show of power (beat, spank, etc.) are likely to cause poor conscience development, in other words, insufficient internal control (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1988).

The reason for college graduate mothers' children not having the expected top scores might be because their mothers are educating themselves to improve themselves not to help their children's development. Considering illiterate mothers' children having the lowest mean scores; these mothers participating in the study were all coming from village sub-culture which makes us think that the difficulties in reaching those mothers and financial disadvantages both make it hard to take educational services to them and even if they get educated somehow they are still lacking sufficient and qualified stimulus which harm the functionality of education.

When the same sub-dimensions were examined according to gender, seriousness perception, absence of authority, alterability of rules criteria and Total Mean Scores for perception of Moral Rules, no statistically meaningful difference was found. Considering the recent conditions, the more the women are educated and start working, the less is the distinction between the two genders. This can be thought as an effect for not having any meaningful differences in the mean scores regarding seriousness perception, absence of authority, alterability of rules criteria and Total Mean Scores for perception of Moral Rules. However, the mean scores of girls ( $X=7,82$ ) and boys ( $X=6,75$ ) in terms of absence of rules shown statistically meaningful difference showing that in the absence of a rule girls are still more likely to obey them than boys.

Aydin (1997) studied primary school students' morals who were in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades in terms of gender and included 395 students in İstanbul in his study. According to the results of the study, there was a meaningful relationship in moral and social values of these children in terms of gender, age, and grade level variables. Uğurel (1974) studied how girls and boys are affected from socio-cultural environment in villages and found that a low socio-economic level has a negative effect on moral development of girls and boys and the older these children get, the more social pressure is applied on girls (Cit.: Kağıtçıbaşı, 1988). According to Nazik, (2000), boys are raised less traditionally and girls are raised in more protective and conventional ways in our society. Research made on this have shown that gender preferences are likely in favor of boys (Cit.: Çagdas and Seğer, 2005).

Flynn (1984) studied moral development with 29 pre-school girls and 29 pre-school boys and found that boys develop their judgment of moral rules earlier than girls. The reason to this was thought as boys have different wants and have more complicated rules in their games than girls have. Nevertheless, with the same age group Smetana, Schlagman and Adams (1993) conducted a study examining the dependence on the authority in obeying the rules and the seriousness perception in terms of the gender variable. In their study they found that boys perceive rules less serious, punishable and independent from authority compared to girls. In evaluating moral wrongdoings, it is seen that while girls were having paradox of object and making judgments considering psychological harm, boys were making judgments considering aggression. Hereby, the result of their study has shown that pre-school children can differ moral and social rules while they are judging theoretical and actual wrongdoings.

Smetana (1981) conducted a study examining moral and social development of children in terms of the following dimensions; seriousness perception, perception of rules, the factuality of rules and the punishment deserved and found that children take the violation of moral rules more serious than the social ones. In addition, the ones who violate moral rules deserve punishment more than those who violate the social ones.

While kids are being raised, boys are greeted with more tolerance when cursing/ swearing than girls although the behavior is criticized for both genders. Besides, kindness and good manners are applied more on girls than boys. While society expects boys to be powerful, strong, courageous, and go-getter type of children, girls are expected to be well-behaved, kind and tender (Yörükoğlu, 1993). This double standard in child rearing can be the main reason causing meaningful gender difference in Knowledge of Moral Rules regarding absence of rules criterion. Another study supporting this present one is the study of Sanderson and Siegal (1988) in which children described the people who violate moral rules as naughtier and more likely deserving punishment. The gender variable showing meaningful differences only in absence of rules criterion regarding Moral Rules might be the reason that children consider moral rules more universal and serious.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In the present study mother's education level found to be effective on children's knowledge of Moral Rules. However, the effect is not as it would be expected with the more educated mothers are, the better children have the knowledge of Moral Rules It is rather the factor of mothers who had education and those who didn't have any education at all. One of the two striking results is in the mean scores of alterability of rules criteria and Total Mean Scores for perception of Moral Rules revealing that children whose mothers had no education got lower scores than those who were secondary school, high school and college graduates. The other one is that secondary school graduate mothers' children got highest Total Mean scores in terms of mother's education level. Considering gender variable, it was only effective on absence of rules sub-dimension in favor of girls.

Within the framework of these results the following suggestions can be made for the researchers:

In order to inform future parents about child development and education and help them have positive parent attitudes and behaviors "Parental Education" classes should be a part of the curriculum in secondary schools and colleges.

"Parental Education Programs" should be prepared including not only physical, emotional, mental and language development of children but also social and moral development to increase the knowledge of parents about child development and education and help them apply their learning in real life situations. These programs should be popularized countrywide and regions which are socio-economically disadvantaged should be of first

priority. Literacy courses should be extended in these regions.

Cooperation among Ministry of Education, related departments of universities, voluntary agencies in private sector and the media should be provided. Eligible stimulant should be provided for parents about basic principles of child development and education via mass media such as radio, TV, journals and books.

Activities like workshops, conferences, interaction groups should be organized for parents in terms of moral and social development. Parents should provide appropriate settings for their children to improve their social and moral development.

Instead of applying child-centered programs in primary education institutions, “Family/Child Centered” programs should be applied and these programs should be popularized across the country.

In order to generalize similar researches should be done with different population and sample groups so that the results can be tested. In addition, the present study which is limited with sub-socio cultural level, mother’s education level and gender variables can be a source to future studies with different variables such as mothers who are workers and who are non-workers, father’s education level, child’s birth-order, child’s age and whether the child attended pre-school or not.

Once and for all, new assessment tools measuring primary school children’s Social and Moral development can be developed considering cultural differences.

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