



## Print Awareness Skills and Home Literacy Environment of Turkish Preschoolers\*

### Okul Öncesi Dönem Türk Çocuklarda Yazı Farkındalığı Becerileri ve Ev Okuryazarlık Ortamı

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**ABSTRACT:** In the literature, the importance of early literacy experiences provided at home by parents to the development of early literacy skills is often expressed. Therefore, the study was aimed at identifying the possible relationships between home early literacy experiences and children's print awareness skills. The participants of the study comprised of 60 preschool children (48-68 months) whose native language is Turkish. The Home Early Literacy Environment Questionnaire (HLEQ) used for the assessment of home literacy skills were conveyed to the parents by the preschool teachers. The Early Childhood Print Awareness Checklist used for the assessment of children's print awareness skills were individually administered to each child. The results displayed a variation in early literacy skills within 48-68 months and indicated that variables pertaining to "writing" might have been effective in this variation. Another prominent finding was that demographic variables such as parental education and frequency of participation in social activities, as well as, most of the HLEQ variables correlated with each other at varying strengths. Similar studies specific to the Turkish language should be conducted in order to identify various predictors of both home literacy skills and print awareness. The study results were discussed in light of the existing literature.

**Keywords:** Home literacy, print awareness, early literacy

**ÖZ:** Alanyazında, erken okuryazarlık becerilerinin gelişiminde ev ortamında ebeveynler tarafından sunulan erken okuryazarlık deneyimlerinin önemli olduğu sıkça ifade edilmektedir. Yapılan araştırmada, ev ortamında sağlanan erken okuryazarlık deneyimlerinin çocukların yazı farkındalığı becerileri ile olası ilişkilerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Araştırmanın katılımcılarını ana dili Türkçe olan ve okul öncesi eğitim almakta olan 60 çocuk (48-68 aylık) oluşturmaktadır. Ev ortamında sağlanan erken okuryazarlık deneyimlerini değerlendirmek amacıyla kullanılan Ev Erken Okuryazarlık Ortamı Ölçeği (EVOK) okul öncesi öğretmenleri tarafından ailelere iletilmiştir. Çocukların yazı farkındalığı becerilerini değerlendirmek amacıyla kullanılan Erken Çocukluk Dönemi Yazı Farkındalığı Kontrol Listesi ise araştırmacılar tarafından tüm çocuklara bireysel olarak uygulanmıştır. Sonuçlar, erken okuryazarlık becerilerinin 48-68 ay arasında bir değişim gösterdiğini ortaya koymuş, var olan değişimde ev ortamında sağlanan erken okuryazarlık becerilerinden "yazma" becerileri ile ilgili değişkenlerin etkili olabileceğini göstermiştir. Sosyal etkinliklere katılım sıklığı ve anne ve baba eğitim düzeyi gibi demografik değişkenler ile ev ortamında sağlanan erken okuryazarlık deneyimlerinin çoğunun birbirleri ile farklı düzeylerde ilişkili bulunması da dikkat çeken noktalar arasında yer almıştır. Dilimize özgü benzer çalışmaların yapılması ile gerek erken okuryazarlık becerilerinin, gerek bu beceriler arasında önemli yer tutan yazı farkındalığı becerilerinin farklı yordayıcılarının ortaya konulması mümkün olabilecektir. Araştırmadan elde edilen sonuçlar alanyazın bulguları ışığında tartışılmıştır.

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**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Ev okuryazarlık ortamı, yazı farkındalığı, erken okuryazarlık

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Early literacy skills are generally defined as prerequisite skills acquired prior to formal learning of the rules associated with reading and writing (Dickinson, McCabe, Anastasopoulos, Peisner-Feinberg, & Poe, 2003). Past studies emphasize the key role of particularly early childhood period in the acquisition of early literacy skills (Justice et al., 2010; Lonigan, Burgess & Anthony, 2000; Shanahan & Lonigan, 2010). Early literacy skills basically comprise phonological awareness, vocabulary knowledge, alphabet knowledge and print awareness skills. There are numerous studies closely correlating early literacy environment and experiences with children's future reading skills (Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, & Jared, 2006; Lonigan & Whitehurst 1998;). Furthermore, studies on the association of receptive and expressive vocabulary with reading and writing skills stress especially the relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge (Durham et al., 2007; Farkas & Beron, 2004; Johnson et al., 2008; Kim, Im & Kwon, 2015; Taylor, Greenberg & Terry, 2016). Phonological awareness skills are also considered to be important early literacy skills. In comparison to other early literacy skills, the longitudinal effects of phonological awareness on reading and writing skills are more commonly researched. Phonological awareness is basically defined as being aware of the individual phonemes that make up words and several studies have indicated phonological awareness skills as an early predictor of formal reading and writing skills (Puranik and Lonigan, 2012; Whitehurst and Lonigan, 2001). Moreover, phonological awareness skills are also an important predictor of learning new vocabulary and spelling (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). Alphabet and letter knowledge involve the acquisition of knowledge and skills about the shapes and function of letters. Past studies report that the acquisition of alphabet and letter knowledge in early childhood plays an important role in the formal learning of reading and writing (Clay, 1993; Foster et al., 2016; Oates et al., 2015; Sawyer et al., 2014).

Basically, beyond an awareness of phonemes and letters, early awareness of the shape and function of printed letters significantly contribute to the process of reading and writing. Studies on the relationship between the different components of early literacy skills and formal reading and writing skills have demonstrated the critical correlation of particularly print awareness with future reading and writing skills (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Farver, Nakamoto & Lonigan, 2007; Kim, Im & Kwon, 2015; Lefebvre, Tradeau & Sutton, 2011; Oates et al. 2015; Sawyer et al., 2014; Xue, & Meisels, 2004).

Print awareness comprises print order skills, identifying and making meaning of print and environmental print, knowledge of letter shape, knowing letters are combined to form syllables and words, letter naming and establishing sound-symbol association, awareness of the concept of word, knowing words are combined to form sentences and distinguishing words as long or short by the number of letters. In addition to these skills, knowledge of the rules pertaining to reading and writing, as well as, knowing that the white spaces between words represent a break in reading-writing and that the story or the text might continue on the next page are also within the scope of print awareness skills (Justice et al., 2010). Studies conducted in different languages showed that children's early print awareness skills increased with chronological age (Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, & Jared, 2006) and that the development of print awareness skills in preschoolers followed the same developmental steps (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004). Furthermore, the ability to associate spoken and written language plays a key role in the acquisition of formal reading and writing skills, and print awareness contributes to this process (Çetin, 2014; Levy et al., 2006). For instance, Vacca et al. (2006) examined the relationship between print awareness and language skills and reported that print awareness directly affected receptive language skills particularly by facilitating the association between written and spoken

language. Other studies on the relationship of print awareness with formal reading and writing skills revealed the association of these skills with decoding and spelling (Kim, Im & Kwon, 2015). The results of the study conducted by Cunningham, Perry and Stanovich (2001) showed that writing skills assessed at the end of preschool predicted 7%, 11% and 8% of the variance for decoding, spelling and reading comprehension skills at the end of first grade, respectively. Bayraktar and Temel (2014) investigated the effect of the Educational Program of Readiness for Reading and Writing (EPPRW) on the print awareness, phonological awareness and reading-writing skills of 6-year-old children. The study results revealed that the Program was effective on print awareness, phonological awareness and reading-writing skills.

The significance of quality learning experiences on the acquisition of print awareness skills is already acknowledged (Bakermans-Kranenburg, van IJzendoorn, & Bradley, 2005; Melhuish et al., 2008). In this context, the characteristics of home early literacy experiences have become one of the most frequently researched subjects (Cooper, 2005; Foster et al., 2016; Kim, Im & Kwon, 2015; Korat, Shamir, & Arbiv, 2011; Reynolds, Wheldall, & Madelaine, 2011; Rodriguez & Tamis-LaMonda, 2011; Sawyer et al., 2014; Slavin, Lake, Davis & Madden, 2011; Taylor, Greenberg & Terry, 2016; Tolchinsky, 2003; Turan and Akoğlu, 2014). On the other hand, the development of these skills could be promoted through planned educational programs constructed by adults instead of spontaneous acquisition in the course of development (Bayraktar and Temel, 2014; Evans, 2008; McGee & Morrow, 2005).

There are two types of home early literacy experiences: informal and formal (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Senechal, 2006). "Informal experiences" comprise learning experiences during shared book reading. Past studies suggest that shared book reading experiences promote the development of children's receptive and expressive vocabulary and that vocabulary skills have an intermediary role and indirectly affect reading skills in the second, third and fourth grades (Hood, Conlon, & Andrews, 2008; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Senechal, 2006; Skwarchuk, Sowinski, & LeFevre, 2014). Furthermore, studies on home early literacy experiences indicate that the reading habits of family members, as well as, the frequency and the quality of shared reading interactions are determinant factors (Curenton & Justice, 2008; Oates et al., 2015). "Formal experiences" provided by the parents in the home environment are education-based early literacy skills such as alphabet knowledge and word reading (Sawyer et al., 2014). Past studies in non-Turkish languages showed that letter recognition and naming skills, as well as, alphabet knowledge predicted word reading performance at all grade levels (Hood, Conlon, & Andrews, 2008; Skwarchuk, Sowinski, & LeFevre, 2014). In view of the increased use of touchscreen devices such as tablets in home and educational environments, Neumann (2016) investigated the relationship between use of digital reading and writing tools and early literacy skills in 57 children aged 2-4. The study results revealed a positive correlation between access to digital applications at home and print awareness skills.

Past studies in non-Turkish languages yielded varying levels of association between formal/informal home early literacy experiences and print awareness. However, we did not find any studies investigating the possible relationships between print awareness, an important developmental factor for future reading and writing outcomes, and home early literacy experiences in a sample of native Turkish-speaking children. The researchers believe the stimuli that promote home early literacy skills and the developmental outcomes of children's print awareness skills should be examined. This study aimed to identify the possible relationships between home early literacy experiences and children's print awareness skills in the preschool period.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Research Design

This correlational survey study was carried out to identify the possible relationships between home early literacy experiences and print awareness skills in children aged 48-68 months. Correlational survey designs are used to determine the existence and/or the degree of covariance between two or more variables (Karasar, 2012).

### 2.2. Participants

The study participants comprised 60 children aged 48-68 months (Mean=57.58 months, SD=6.03) and their families. 27 (45%) of the children were female and 33 (55%) were male. The percentages of 48-54-, 55-61- and 62-68-month-old children were 38.3%, 31.7% and 30%, respectively. Convenience sampling was used in determining the participants and for this purpose private preschools were preferred. The study group children had age-appropriate development and attended private preschools of middle socioeconomic status located in Ankara city center. They had not been diagnosed with a neurological problem, hearing loss and/or speech and/or language disorder. They were native Turkish speakers and Turkish was the only language spoken at home. The percentages of the mothers/fathers who had high school, associate, bachelor's and master's-doctoral degrees were 10%/10%, 3%/3.3%, 68.3%/70% and 18.3%/16.7%, respectively.

### 2.3. Data Collection Instruments

*Home Early Literacy Environment Questionnaire (HLEQ; Sarıca, Ergül, Akoğlu, Deniz, Karaman, Bahap-Kudret et al., 2014)*: The HLEQ is an assessment instrument developed to gather data on home early literacy experiences in preschool children (Ergül et al., 2014). The lowest and the highest possible scores for the instrument comprising 23 items and 4 factors were 23 and 114, respectively. A high score indicates favorable home early literacy experiences for the child. The HLEQ is individually completed by one of the parents. The validity and reliability study of the HLEQ was conducted with the participation of 341 parents with children attending 12 preschools located in Ankara city center that were representative of lower, middle and upper socioeconomic status. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the internal consistency of the subscales ranged between .70 and .84. In the present study, the HLEQ was used to gather information on home early literacy experiences without conducting a categorization of these experiences.

*Early Childhood Print Awareness Checklist (ECPAC; Işıtan and Akoğlu, 2016)*: The ECPAC developed to evaluate the print awareness skills of typically developing children aged 48-72 months by means of a children's picture book comprises 33 items. The number of items in the *Book and Print Order*, *Letters* and *Words* sections were 20, 3 and 10, respectively. In addition, the skills in the *Other* section allows information to be obtained on children's prewriting skills. The *Book and Print Order* and *Words* sections had higher reliability coefficients than the rest of the sections (.74 and .76, respectively). The KR-20 reliability coefficients for the *Book and Print Order*, *Words* and *Letters* sections were computed as .74, .76 and .62, respectively.

### 2.4. Data Collection Procedure

The study employed convenience sampling in participant selection and the children of the parents who agreed to participate voluntarily were included in the study. Initially, private preschools in districts with middle socioeconomic status were designated. Then, with the referral of the teachers employed at these preschools, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the parents of 48-68-month-old children to inform them about the aim and the content of the study. The information forms and the HLEQ forms (Sarıca, Ergül, Akoğlu, Deniz, Karaman,

Bahap-Kudret et al., 2014) were conveyed to the parents who agreed to participate through the teachers employed at the preschools their children attended. The parents were requested to fill the forms within a week and the completed forms were retrieved through the preschool teachers. In addition to demographic characteristics, the form allowed the researchers to gather information on the frequency of participation in social activities. The ECPAC (Işıtan and Akoğlu, 2016) used to assess the print awareness skills of children aged 48-68 months was administered individually to the participating children.

## 2.5. Data Analysis

Kolmogorov Smirnov test was performed to test for normality of distribution of the study data ( $p>.05$ ). Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of participant demographics. Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to determine possible relationships between the study variables, a single-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) for unrelated samples was performed for the comparison of the mean variables by age group, and a Tukey test was conducted to identify the source of the difference. The effects of chronological age on the dependent variables was interpreted with eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ).

## 3. FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation distributions, as well as, the minimum and maximum values for ECPAC performance and HLEQ score by age in months.

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation distributions, and minimum and maximum values for ECPAC performance and HLEQ score**

		ECPAC					HLEQ				
		Book and Print Order	Letters	Words	Sum of ECPAC	Other	Reading	Writing	**PhA and PrA	Shared Book Reading	Sum of HLEQ
48-54 months (n=23)	Mean	10.91	1.48	2.87	15.22	2.22	28.61	14.52	14.61	17.17	75.78
	SD	2.99	1.03	1.51	4.00	.85	4.69	3.76	5.89	3.33	11.56
	Min.	5	0	0	7	1	19	8	6	10	54
	Max.	17	3	6	24	3	39	22	29	20	98
55-61 months (n=19)	Mean	13.26	1.47	3.79	18.53	2.53	28.89	15.84	16.84	16.26	77.05
	SD	2.88	.69	1.65	4.06	.84	5.10	5.53	4.94	4.48	14.89
	Min.	9	0	1	12	1	20	9	12	6	47
	Max.	17	3	7	26	3	36	25	27	20	102
62-68 months (n=18)	Mean	14.28	2.11	3.89	20.33	2.83	28.89	17.11	15.56	15.11	76.67
	SD	1.96	.96	1.41	3.51	.51	3.98	5.02	4.96	3.51	11.89
	Min.	10	0	1	14	1	21	8	9	9	55
	Max.	17	3	7	26	3	36	25	26	20	99

\*\* PhA and PrA: Phonological Awareness and Print Awareness

The ECPAC sum of mean score of the 48-54-month-old children (Mean=15.22, SD=4.00) were lower than those of the 55-61-month-old (Mean=18.53, SD=4.06) and the 62-68-month-old (Mean=20.33, SD=0.51) children. The sum of HLEQ mean score of the parents of the 55-61-month-old children (Mean=77.05, SD=14.89) were higher than those of the 62-68-month-old (Mean=76.67, SD=11.89) and the 48-54-month-old (Mean=75.78, SD=11.56) children.

The ANOVA results for the ECPAC and HLEQ mean scores by chronological age are given in Table 2.

**Table 2: ANOVA results for ECPAC and HLEQ mean scores by chronological age**

		Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	F	p	$\eta^2$	Significant Difference (months)
<b>**PrA – Book and Print Order</b>	Between Groups	124.212	2	62.106	8.569	.001*	.23	62-68>55-61>48-54
	Within Groups	413.121	57	7.248				
	Total	537.333	59					
<b>PrA – Letters</b>	Between Groups	5.080	2	2.540	3.000	.058	.09	
	Within Groups	48.254	57	.847				
	Total	53.333	59					
<b>PrA – Words</b>	Between Groups	13.389	2	6.694	2.857	.066	.09	
	Within Groups	133.544	57	2.343				
	Total	146.933	59					
<b>Sum of PrA</b>	Between Groups	278.950	2	139.475	9.259	.000*	.24	62-68>55-61>48-54
	Within Groups	858.650	57	15.064				
	Total	1137.600	59					
<b>Other</b>	Between Groups	3.850	2	1.925	3.310	.044*	.10	62-68>48-54
	Within Groups	33.150	57	.582				
	Total	37.000	59					
<b>HLEQ – Reading</b>	Between Groups	1.138	2	.569	.026	.974	.01	
	Within Groups	1225.046	57	21.492				
	Total	1226.183	59					
<b>HLEQ – Writing</b>	Between Groups	68.140	2	34.070	1.503	.231	.05	
	Within Groups	1292.043	57	22.667				
	Total	1360.183	59					
<b>HLEQ – ***PhA and PrA</b>	Between Groups	51.951	2	25.975	.911	.408	.03	
	Within Groups	1624.449	57	28.499				
	Total	1676.400	59					
<b>HLEQ – Shared Book Reading</b>	Between Groups	42.967	2	21.483	1.499	.232	.05	
	Within Groups	816.766	57	14.329				
	Total	859.733	59					
<b>Sum of HLEQ</b>	Between Groups	17.990	2	8.995	.055	.947	.02	
	Within Groups	9336.860	57	163.805				
	Total	9354.850	59					

\*p<.05; \*\*PrA: Print Awareness, \*\*\*PhA and PrA: Phonological Awareness and Print Awareness

Among the skills assessed with ECPAC, the difference in *Book and Print Order* and *Sum of Print Awareness* between age groups (month ranges) was statistically significant [ $F(2,57)=8.569$ ,  $p<.05$ ;  $F(2,57)=9.259$ ,  $p<.05$ , respectively]. The eta-squared values for the differences between the variables by age group indicated large effect sizes for *Book and Print Order* and *Sum of Print Awareness* (.23 and .24, respectively) and a medium effect size for *Other* (.10). The Tukey test results showed that the source of the difference in *Book and Print Order* and

*Sum of Print Awareness* was the higher mean score of the 62-68-month-old children compared to those of the 55-61- and 48-54-month-old children. There was also a statistically significant difference in the mean scores for the skills evaluated under the *Other* section between age groups [ $F(2,57)= 3.310, p<.05$ ]. The Tukey test results indicated that the source of the difference was the higher mean score of the 62-68-month-old children than that of 48-54-month-old children. In addition, there was no statistically difference in other ECPAC skills by age group ( $p>.05$ ). The analysis results revealed no statistically significant difference between the HLEQ mean scores of the parents with respect to age. In addition, independent samples t test results showed no statistically significant differences between the HLEQ mean scores and sub-components of ECPAC with respect to gender ( $p>.05$ ).

The correlation analysis results for the study variables are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Correlation analysis results for the study variables**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1.Age	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.Maternal Education	.175	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.Paternal Education	-.035	.380**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4.Participation in Social Activities	-.212	-.026	-.035	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.***PrA – Book and Print Order	.470**	.000	-.024	.056	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6.PrA – Letters	.265*	.045	-.008	.355**	.268*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7. PrA – Words	.276*	-.090	-.126	.197	.503**	.072	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8.Sum of PrA	.489**	-.008	-.059	.028	.935**	.430**	.716**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9.PrA – Other	.323*	.014	.110	.128	.532**	.113	.380**	.531**	-	-	-	-	-	-
10.HLEQ – Reading	.027	.458**	.450**	.265*	.142	-.072	.038	.098	.092	-	-	-	-	-
11.HLEQ – Reading	.224	.032	.000	.010	.319*	.131	.224	.327*	.167	.116	-	-	-	-
12.HLEQ – ****PhA and PrA	.084	.172	-.060	.148	.086	.127	-.008	.083	-.096	.199	.562**	-	-	-
13.HLEQ – Shared Book Reading	-.223	.122	.172	.347**	.005	-.073	.272*	.083	.163	.412**	.118	.179	-	-
14.Sum of HLEQ	.031	.317*	.235	.291*	.164	.089	.159	.188	.076	.633**	.636**	.725**	.606**	-

\* $p<.05$ ;  $p<**.01$  ; \*\*\* PrA: Print Awareness, \*\*\*\* PhA and PrA: Phonological Awareness and Print Awareness

The relationships of the HLEQ subscales with the study variables were examined. There was a moderate, positive and significant correlation between the *Reading* subscale and maternal and paternal education ( $r=0.458, p<.01$ ;  $r=0.450, p<.01$ , respectively) while the correlation between the *Reading* subscale and frequency of participation in social activities was weak, positive and significant ( $r=0.265, p<.05$ ). There was a moderate, positive and significant correlation between the *Writing* subscale and *Book and Print Order* ( $r=0.319, p<.05$ ). Similarly, the correlation between the *Writing* subscale and *Sum of Print Awareness* was moderate, positive and significant ( $r=0.327, p<.05$ ). Examination of the correlation of *Phonological*

*Awareness and Print Awareness* with the other variables showed that this subscale did not correlate with demographic variables and/or print awareness skills; however, it displayed a moderate, positive and significant correlation with the *HLEQ Writing* subscale ( $r=0.562, p<.01$ ). The correlation of *Shared Book Reading* with frequency of participation in social activities ( $r=0.347, p<.01$ ) and with the *HLEQ Reading* subscale ( $r=0.412, p<.01$ ) were both moderate, positive and significant, while there was a weak, positive and significant correlation between *Shared Book Reading* and *Print Awareness – Word* skills ( $r=0.272, p<.05$ ). The correlation of *Sum of HLEQ Score* with maternal education ( $r=0.317, p<.05$ ), as well as, the *HLEQ Reading, Writing* and *Shared Book Reading* subscales ( $r=0.633, p<.01$ ;  $r=0.636, p<.01$ ;  $r=0.606, p<.01$ ; respectively) were both moderate, positive and significant, while there was a weak, positive and significant correlation with frequency of participation in social activities ( $r=0.291, p<.05$ ), and a strong, positive and significant correlation with the *HLEQ Phonological Awareness and Print Awareness* subscales ( $r=0.725, p<.01$ ).

#### 4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to identify the possible relationships between home early literacy experiences and children's print awareness skills in children aged 48-68 months. Past studies have demonstrated the development of early literacy skills with age (Çetin 2015; Justice & Ezell 2001). In the present study, the mean scores for all print awareness subscales, as well as, sum of print awareness mean score increased with age. Justice and Ezell (2001) reported that children's ability to discern and recognize letters developed after 61 months. Developmental findings in the literature suggest that cognitive processes change with age and that these changes play a role in the development of early literacy skills (Curenton & Justice, 2008; Neumann, Hood & Ford, 2013). Furthermore, the results for the *Other* section that evaluates children's prewriting skills showed that pencil-holding and skills related to the form of print (e.g.; writing from left to right, leaving space between words and word-like scribbles, etc.) developed with age. Bialystok (1995) found that 3-6-year-old children could produce print, letters, pictures and shapes that bore a resemblance to cursive writing. Levy et al. (2006) reported that word learning occurred through graphic information in the word shapes and that word shape, word elements and spelling were more developed in 5-6-year-olds than younger children. In addition, they revealed that 4-year-old children could understand spelling patterns, which they suggested indicated the initiation of orthographic knowledge in 4-year-old children. The results of the present study are similar to those of other studies in the literature.

The results on home early literacy experiences in children aged 48-68 months indicated that these experiences varied by age in months. The parents of the 48-54-month-old children had a lower mean score than the other age groups in the *HLEQ – Reading* and *HLEQ – Writing* subscales. *HLEQ – Reading* and *HLEQ – Writing* results indicate that an increase with age in shared book reading activities with family members and writing experiences promote both reading and prewriting skills. However, the *HLEQ – Shared Book Reading* scores did not display an increase in parallel to age in months and the parents of the 48-54-month-old children scored higher than the parents of the 55-61- and the 62-68-month-old children. Although these results show that shared book reading habits increased with age, the higher mean score of the parents of the 48-54-month-old children in comparison to the other age groups suggests that the parents of the 48-54-month-old children utilized shared book reading more frequently as a way of participating in the children's activities during the day. However, shared book activity should take place in the guidance of the adult following the child's lead and requires a systematic approach in which the reader and the listener switch roles during shared book reading (Ezell, & Justice, 2005; Lonigan, & Whitehurst, 1998; Zevenbergen, Whitehurst, & Zevenbergen, 2003; Zucker, Justice, Piasta, & Kaderavek, 2010). The researchers attribute this variation between the *HLEQ Shared Book Reading* mean scores to the parents' lack of adequate knowledge about

shared book reading strategies, in other words, to their inability to distinguish reading together with the child from reading to the child. There are also studies in the literature indicating that the methods parents adopt in teaching early literacy skills to their children are an important determinant for children's early literacy skills (Neumann, Hood & Ford 2013; Taylor, Greenberg & Terry, 2016). Although not included in the analyses, an investigation of the HLEQ item responses as a whole showed that the 55-61- and the 62-68-month-old children displayed a general tendency to independently read and/or look at the pictures in and/or examine the pictures in books of their own choosing, and that this was encouraged by the parents. These findings on the HLEQ item responses support the results for the mean subscale scores.

Data analysis revealed similar results for the *HLEQ – Phonological Awareness and Print Awareness* subscale, where the parents of the 55-61-month-old children had higher mean scores than the parents of the 48-54- and the 62-68-month-old children. This result suggests that the parents believed the 48-54-month range was too early for teaching phonological awareness skills to their children. The results for the parents of the 62-68-month-old children indicates that the parents related phonological awareness skills directly with formal reading and writing experiences and/or reading and writing education, and therefore perceived these exercises as formal experiences that should be implemented by teachers at the school rather than in the home environment. This is also supported by the fact that the parents of the 55-61-month-old children had the highest HLEQ overall score. These results suggest that the parents were generally not adequately informed about the content of early literacy skills, as well as, phonological awareness and print awareness skills, and the significance of acquiring these skills in the preschool period. However, parental knowledge and perception of, and/or parental attitude toward, early literacy components were not evaluated within the scope of the present study. It is imperative to conduct studies where home early literacy experiences are investigated together with knowledge and perception of, and attitude toward, the different components of early literacy, in order to obtain more comprehensive results.

There was no difference in the HLEQ mean scores between age groups while the difference in *Print Awareness – Book and Print Order, Sum of Print Awareness and ECPAC – Other* subscale mean scores was significant. The difference was between consecutive groups of six months, which indicates rapid development of print awareness skills during the preschool period. The association of all ECPAC subscales and the overall ECPAC with chronological age supports this finding. In addition, the lack of a significant difference in the HLEQ subscale mean scores by age group suggests that home early literacy experiences did not display a variation and/or improvement with age, in other words, that early literacy experiences provided at home by the parents were of similar quality. This inference is supported by the lack of a significant relationship between the HLEQ subscales and chronological age.

Examination of the variables in association with the HLEQ subscales revealed that maternal and paternal education, as well as, frequency of participation in social activities correlated with *Shared Book Reading*. Curenton and Justice (2008) concluded that parental education was an important factor in home early literacy environment. Various recent studies have also argued that parental educational attainment and the frequency of participation in social activities were important indicators of socioeconomic status (Deniz, Türe, Uysal, and Akar, 2015). In this context, these results indicate that home literacy experiences were shaped more by socioeconomic characteristics than children's chronological age.

The literature emphasizes shared book reading as an important strategy that promotes home early literacy experiences. There was a weak correlation between the *HLEQ Shared Book Reading* mean score and the *ECPAC – Words* mean score. This suggests that the parents sometimes explained the meanings of words to their children and/or pointed at some words during shared book reading. Past studies have stressed the significance of the number of books

children have, their interest and attitude toward reading, and shared book reading experiences with family members for the development of print awareness skills (Kim, Im & Kwon 2015).

Another prominent result of the study is the lack of any correlation of the *HLEQ Phonological Awareness and Print Awareness* mean scores with ECPAC and/or demographic variables. All the children who participated in the study attended preschool education. The recently updated preschool education program includes achievements and indicators for home early literacy skills with examples on how to promote these skills. The literature also emphasizes the development of these skills with age and the importance of the preschool period in their acquisition. However, there are only a limited number of studies on early literacy in Turkey and early literacy skills have only recently begun to be recognized by specialists in other fields. Both families and teachers are yet to gain an adequate understanding of early literacy skills (Ergül, Karaman, Akoğlu, Tufan, Sarıca and Kudret, 2014). Furthermore, there is a prevalent belief among parents and teachers that children's acquisition of early literacy skills, especially naming beginning sounds in words, attempting to read familiar words and spelling would hinder the learning of reading and writing in the future. The *HLEQ Phonological Awareness and Print Awareness* subscale comprises skills such as letter naming during reading, reading environmental print. Neumann (2016) emphasized that especially identifying and making meaning of environmental print was a major determinant in the development of print awareness. In addition, interpretation of environmental print requires cognitive processes that enable understanding environmental print, differentiating the concepts of word and letter, and making meaning of logos and signs (Neumann, Hood & Ford 2013). Ergül et al. (2014) investigated preschool teachers' knowledge of early literacy and their classroom strategies. The study results showed that the teachers allocated less time to phonological awareness, print awareness and alphabet knowledge and instead gave precedence to line drawing exercises. The results of the present study revealed that early literacy skills were not adequately supported either at home or school.

The research is limited to data on typically developing children who were attended private preschools of middle socioeconomic status located in Ankara and also gathered information from their parents. But it is possible to mention that the existence of other variables, such as preschool teachers' attitudes towards print awareness and curriculum practices in classroom that may have an impact on children's print awareness skills. In this research, however, the print awareness skills were discussed in relation to literacy experiences provided in the home environment. Therefore, the results should be addressed in the context of the assessment tools used in this research.

## 5. CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

The study results displayed a variation in early literacy skills within 48-68 months and indicated that variables pertaining to writing might have been effective in this variation. However, it is possible to discuss the presence of other variables that might be effective on children's print awareness skills. For instance, there are various studies that suggest children's cognitive characteristics and their interest and attitude toward early literacy skills could generally be effective on early literacy skills (Chansa-Kabali et al., 2014; Oates et al., 2015; Pullen & Justice, 2003; Scarborough & Dobrich 1994). Another prominent finding was that demographic variables such as parental education and frequency of participation in social activities, as well as, most of the HLEQ variables correlated with each other at varying strengths. Similar studies specific to the Turkish language should be conducted in order to identify various predictors of both home literacy skills and print awareness.

Comparison of the results of the present study with those of other studies in the literature conducted for languages other than Turkish leads to the impression that the developmental

performance of the participants was below expectations. However, studies aimed at the assessment of home early literacy skills have only been undertaken recently in Turkey and studies on systematic interventions are quite limited. This has resulted in a lack of adequate knowledge on the subject in both teachers and families. The literature emphasizes parental role in scaffolding home early literacy skills (Gül, 2007; Turan and Akoğlu, 2014) and suggests two methods for developing a home literacy environment that could promote children's interest, as well as, their home early literacy skills (Baroody & Diamond, 2012). The first method is the provision of a home environment where parents actively participate in literacy activities with their children (e.g.; shared book reading) and create opportunities for their children to utilize their literacy skills. In the second method, parents set a model for their children in literacy activities (e.g.; reading newspapers, magazines, books where the child can see them). Past studies have demonstrated that while both settings were associated at different levels with children's interest and literacy skills, home environments where children actively participated in the activities correlated more strongly with their interest and early literacy skills (Burgess, Hecht & Lonigan 2002; Griffin & Morrison, 1997; Weigel, Martin & Bennett, 2006). In this context, investigating the degree of children's active participation in home early literacy experiences in Turkey and conducting studies on various intervention approaches would be greatly beneficial.

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## Uzun Özet

Farklı dillerde yapılan çalışmalarda, okul öncesi dönemdeki çocukların yazı farkındalığı becerilerinin kronolojik yaşla birlikte geliştiği belirtilmektedir. Bu becerilerin gelişimsel kazanımını inceleyen çalışmalar, okul öncesi dönemdeki çocukların yazı farkındalığı becerilerinin gelişiminde aynı gelişimsel basamakları izlediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Buna ek olarak yazı farkındalığı becerilerinin formal okuma yazma becerilerinin edinilmesinde sözel ve yazılı dil arasında ilişki kurulabilmesinin anahtar rol oynadığı belirtilmektedir. Gelecekteki okuma ve yazma becerileri üzerinde etkili olduğu belirtilen yazı farkındalığı becerilerinin edinilmesinde çocuklara sağlanan nitelikli öğrenme yaşantılarının önemi de bilinmektedir. Bununla birlikte, bu becerilerin gelişim sürecinde kendiliğinden edinilmesi yerine yetişkinler tarafından hazırlanmış planlı eğitim programları ile daha iyi geliştirilebileceği de gelişimsel alanyazında belirtilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, ev ortamında sağlanan erken okuryazarlık deneyimlerinin niteliksel ve niceliksel özellikleri araştırmacılar tarafından sıklıkla incelenen konular arasında yerini almıştır. Ev ortamında sağlanan erken okuryazarlık deneyimleri her biri erken okuryazarlık becerilerinin edinimi üzerinde etkili olduğu belirtilen dolaylı ve doğrudan deneyimler olmak üzere iki temel başlık altında ele alınmaktadır. “Dolaylı deneyimler”, anne babaların çocukları ile birlikte kitape okuma etkinlikleri sırasında gerçekleşen öğrenme yaşantılarını kapsamaktadır. Ev ortamında sağlanan erken okuryazarlık deneyimlerine ilişkin yapılan değerlendirmelerde, aile bireylerinin okuma alışkanlıklarının ve çocukları ile gerçekleştirdikleri etkileşimli kitap okuma deneyimlerinin sıklık ve niteliğinin de belirleyici oldukları ifade edilmiştir. Anne baba tarafından ev ortamında sunulan “doğrudan deneyimler” harf tanıma, sözcük okuma gibi öğretime dayalı erken okuryazarlık becerilerini ifade etmekte ve Türkçe dışındaki dillerde yapılan çalışmalar, okul öncesi dönemdeki harf tanıma ve isimlendirme becerilerinin ve alfabe bilgisinin, bütün sınıf düzeylerindeki sözcük okuma performansını yordadığını göstermektedir. Bu bilgiler ışığında, ev ortamında sunulan erken okuryazarlık becerilerini destekleyici uyarılar ile çocukların yazı farkındalığı becerilerine ilişkin gelişimsel çıktılarının ele alınmasının önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir. Bu bağlamda yapılan çalışmada okul öncesi dönemde ev ortamında sağlanan erken okuryazarlık deneyimleri ile çocukların yazı farkındalığı becerileri arasındaki olası ilişkilerin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır.

Yapılan çalışmada “ilişkisel tarama modeli” kullanılmış olup, çalışmanın katılımcılarını yaşları 48-68 ay arasında (Ort., 57.58 ay; S., 6.03) değişen 27’si kız 33’ü erkek olmak üzere toplam 60 çocuk ve aileleri oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma grubunda yer alan çocuklar yaşitları ile uyumlu gelişim göstermekte, Ankara il merkezlerinde bulunan Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı’na bağlı orta sosyoekonomik düzeydeki özel okul öncesi eğitim kurumlarına devam etmektedirler. Araştırmada yer alan çocukların herhangi bir nörolojik problemi, işitme kaybı ve/veya dil ve/veya konuşma bozukluğu tanısı bulunmamaktadır. Katılımcıların ana dilleri Türkçe olup evlerinde konuşulan tek dil Türkçedir.

Katılımcılara ulaşılmasında orta sosyoekonomik düzeydeki bölgelerde yer alan özel okul öncesi eğitim kurumlarının belirlenmesi ilk aşamayı oluşturmuş, ardından belirlenen okullarda görev yapan öğretmenlerin yönlendirmesi ile 48-68 ay arasında çocuğa sahip olan aileler ile yüz yüze görüşülerek çalışmanın amacı ve içeriği hakkında bilgi verilmiştir. Çalışmaya katılmaya gönüllülük bildiren ailelere, çocuklarının devam ettikleri kurumlarda görev yapan okul öncesi öğretmenleri aracılığıyla araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan bilgi formu ve Ev Erken Okuryazarlık Ölçeği (EVOK) ulaştırılmış ve aynı hafta içinde formların doldurulması sağlanmıştır. Doldurulan formlar okul öncesi öğretmenleri aracılığıyla geri alınmıştır. Bu form aracılığıyla ailelerin demografik özelliklerinin yanı sıra sosyal etkinliklere katılım sıklıkları hakkında da bilgi alınmıştır. 48-68 aylık çocukların yazı farkındalığı becerilerinin değerlendirilmesi amacıyla kullanılan Erken Çocukluk Dönemi Yazı Farkındalığı Kontrol Listesi ise katılımcı çocuklara bireysel olarak uygulanmıştır. Değerlendirme işlemleri ortalama 20 dakikalık bir zaman diliminde tamamlanmıştır.

Çalışmada yer alan çocukların annelerinin eğitim düzeylerine ilişkin bulgular incelendiğinde annelerin lise (%10), ön lisans (%3) lisans (%68.3) ve yüksek lisans-doktora programlarından (%18.3) mezun oldukları görülmüştür. Baba eğitim düzeyine ilişkin bulgular da babaların lise (%10), ön lisans (%3.3) lisans (%70) ve yüksek lisans-doktora programlarından (%16.7) mezun olduklarını göstermiştir. Erken çocukluk dönemi yazı farkındalığı becerileri kontrol listesi genel toplamına ilişkin ortalamalar incelendiğinde 62-68 aylık çocukların ortalamalarının (Ort.= 20.33; S= 3.51) 48-54 aylık (Ort.=15.22; S=4.00) ve 55-61 aylık çocukların ortalamalarından (Ort.= 18.53 ;S=4.06) yüksek olduğu gözle çarpılmaktadır. EVOK toplam puanına ilişkin ortalamalar incelendiğinde ise 55-61 aylık çocuğa sahip olan

ailelerin (Ort. = 77.05; S=14.89) en yüksek ortalamaya sahip olduğu, bunu 62-68 aylık (Ort.=76.67; S=11.89) ve 48-54 aylık çocuğa sahip ailelerin (Ort.= 75.78; S=11.56) izlediği görülmüştür. Yazı farkındalığı becerileri kontrol listesi ile değerlendirilen becerilerden “kitap ve yazı düzenine” ilişkin beceriler ve “yazı farkındalığı genel toplamı” açısından yaş grupları (ay aralıkları) arasındaki fark ise istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bulunmuştur, sırayla [ $F(2,57)= 8.569, p<.05$ ;  $F(2,57)= 9.259, p<.05$ ]. Katılımcıların içinde buldukları ay aralıklarına göre değişkenler arasındaki farklılıklara ilişkin Eta kare değerleri ise “kitap ve yazı düzeni” ve “yazı farkındalığı genel toplamında” yüksek düzeyde (.23 ve.24) “diğer” bölümünde ise orta düzeyde (.10) etki büyüklüğüne işaret etmektedir. Elde edilen sonuçlar, “kitap ve yazı düzeni” ve “yazı farkındalığı genel toplamı” üzerinde içinde bulunulan ay aralığının daha etkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Tukey testinden elde edilen sonuçlar, “kitap ve yazı düzenine” ilişkin beceriler ve “yazı farkındalığı genel toplamına” ilişkin farkın 62-68 aylık çocukların ortalamalarının 55-61 aylık ve 48-54 aylık çocuklardan daha yüksek olmasından kaynaklandığını ortaya koymuştur. Sosyal etkinliklere katılım sıklığı ve anne ve baba eğitim düzeyi gibi demografik değişkenler ile ev ortamında sağlanan erken okuryazarlık deneyimlerinin çoğunun birbirleri ile farklı düzeylerde ilişkili bulunması da yapılan araştırmada dikkat çeken noktalardan biri olmuştur. Yapılan araştırmada dikkat çeken bir başka sonuç ise, EVOK-Sesbilgisel farkındalık ve yazı farkındalığı alt testine ilişkin ortalamaların yazı farkındalığı kontrol listesi ve/veya demografik değişkenlerin hiçbiri ile ilişkili bulunmamasıdır.

Araştırmadan elde edilen sonuçlar, alanyazında yer alan ve Türkçe dışındaki dillerde yapılmış çalışmaların sonuçları ile karşılaştırıldığında, bu çalışmada yer alan katılımcıların performanslarının gelişimsel olarak beklenenin altında olduğu izlenimi edinilmektedir. Ne var ki, ülkemizde erken okuryazarlık becerilerini değerlendirmeye yönelik araştırmalar yakın tarihte yapılmaya başlanmış olup, sistematik müdahale çalışmaları ise oldukça sınırlıdır. Bu durum, öğretmenlerin yanı sıra ailelerin de konuyla ilgili yeterli bilgiye sahip olamamasına neden olmaktadır. Yapılan araştırmalar, çocukların etkin olduğu ya da olmadığı her iki durumun da çocukların okuryazarlık becerileri ve ilgileri ile farklı düzeylerde ilişkili olduğunu, ancak, çocukların etkin katılımlarının olduğu ev ortamlarının erken okuryazarlık becerileri ve ilgileri ile daha yüksek düzeyde ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu bağlamda, ülkemizde de ev ortamlarında sunulan erken okuryazarlık deneyimlerinin çocukların etkin katılımını ne kadar sağladığının incelenmesinin ve konuyla ilgili farklı müdahale yaklaşımlarını temel alan çalışmaların yapılmasının alanyazına önemli katkılar sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.