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## EMOTION REGULATION IN PRESCHOOL PERIOD: ACADEMIC RESEARCHES IN TURKEY

*The study aims to investigate research studies conducted in Turkey from 1996 to 2016 on the emotion regulation in pre-school period. Within the scope of the present study 10 Master's and 1 Doctoral theses as well as 3 research papers have been found. The theses and research papers were classified according to the years when the studies were conducted, to the research type, research design, data collection tools, methods and the cities where the data were collected. The theses were gathered from the thesis centre of Council of Higher Education and the research papers were obtained through the index scanning of Google Scholar, Ulakbim-Journal Park, Taylor&Francis Online, Science Direct, Web of Science, Academic Search Complete and ERIC. This study was performed using epistemological document analysis method. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were made use of for the distribution according to the year when Master's and Doctoral theses and the research papers were performed and the methods and techniques used. According to the research results, it is observed that studies carried out on the emotion regulation skills in preschool period in our country have not reached a desired level yet; this issue still remains understudied. As a contribution to the field, it is suggested to include the issue of emotion regulation in the master's and doctoral theses. In pre-school period, validity-reliability studies can be carried out by developing different measurement tools to examine emotion regulation skills of children. Also intercultural studies in which the emotion regulation skills of children in different countries are compared to emotion regulation skills of children in our country might be performed.*

**Keywords:** preschool period, emotion regulation, Master's and Doctoral thesis, scientific articles, research studies in Turkey.

### Introduction

The word “emotion” refers to a strong mental reaction involuntarily taking place in the brain in response to stimuli and influences from the outside world, as a correspondent to the words “expression, visualization and excitement” [9]. Although considering the emotion only as a feeling is something that is more appealing to people, this important concept that concerns both the body and mind, with the expressions such as “I feel happy” or “I feel angry”, requires a more inclusive definition. In this context, if a definition of emotion should be made it can be expressed as the physiological stimulations, feelings, cognitive processes, visible manifestations, and the complex pattern of physical and mental changes involving specific behavioural reactions made in response to situations perceived to be personally significant [5].

Contemporary theories emphasize that emotions affect decision making and social relations by preparing physical and psychological reactions [7]. Beginning from the early childhood, children's personality and emotional perceptions are significantly developing. Such forms of emotional behaviours of children as smiling, crying, and curiosity play a significant role in directing the behaviours of other people. Likewise, the emotional reactions of

other people make children's social behaviours to have a certain pattern [1]. If emotions do not occur in appropriate forms, together with being functional, for example, if they are experienced in an intense way, if they are long-term, or incompatible with the current situations, they can be problematic for the people [11].

It is seen that the concept of emotion regulation, which has very important effects on the social and emotional development of the individual, is considered differently in the scientific literature. In one of these definitions, emotion regulation is individual's observation, evaluation, and regulation of emotional reactions in order to reach the object of his/her desires. There are various types of reactions in cognitive, social, behavioural and physiological dimensions in emotion regulation behaviour. Such reactions as considering things worse than they actually are, and blaming oneself or others are at the cognitive scale, seeking help from outside is at the social one, shouting out loud and crying are at behavioural scale, and faster heartbeat and difficulty in breathing are at the physiological one [4]. In another definition, emotion regulation is the ability to reveal, stop, or sustain the positive or negative reactions to different situations. The observation of children waiting for a desired object as an activity,

which can be considered in the context of postponement of the pleasure, provides extremely valuable information about their emotional and behavioural skills [6].

Emotions can bring people together or separate them, but if they control their emotions they will be able to live in peace. Those who learn the ways of recognizing and managing their emotions and turning them into positive ones in any kind of relations, culture and traditions, as family or the society members, will definitely have no problems in their social life [9]. It should be mentioned that children who are good at managing their emotions can help others in stressful moments. However, children who are weak in regulating their emotions often show less positive social behaviour [1]. Since the concept of emotion regulation is related to social competence, it has important effects on the socialization of a child. It is because children with high social skills and who are able to cooperate with their parents and people in their immediate circle as a rule have better developed emotion regulation skills. In the following years, the emotion regulation will also be related to the psychological status of the grown up person. It is because of the fact that negativity in the acquisition of emotion regulation skills can negatively affect the competences in other development areas. Even in the pre-school period, children with inadequate emotion regulation skills are in the high risk group regarding having depression and aggressive behaviour [10].

The examination of the studies on the emotion regulation skills of pre-school children over the last 10 years has shown that most of them have been made by the foreign researchers. Although the investigations on emotion regulation skills of pre-school children in Turkey have been developing in recent years, this issue still remains understudied here.

The paper aims to investigate the academic researches on emotion regulation skills in pre-school period in Turkey during the 20 years period (from 1996 to 2016). Regarding this purpose, it is supposed that this study can attract the researchers' attention to the subject of emotion regulation skills in the pre-school period and guide those who are interested in it and want to carry out research studies on the topic.

### **Research methods**

#### **Model of the Research**

The research is a screening study in descriptive characteristics, aimed at examining graduate and doctoral dissertations and articles on emotion regulation skills in pre-school period in Turkey over the 20 years period (from 1996 to 2016) [3]. Since the thesis and the articles are intended to be evaluated using specific criteria, this research is also a qualitative study based on document analysis.

#### **Scope of the Study**

10 graduate theses, 1 doctorate thesis, 3 articles on emotion regulation skills in pre-school period constitute the scope of this research. Academic researches to be included in the study were searched using the keywords

“emotion regulation” (duygu düzenleme) and “emotional regulation” (duygusal düzenleme). The theses have been obtained from the National Dissertation Centre of the Higher Education Council (<http://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi>). The articles have been found by scanning Google Scholar, Ulakbim-Magazine Park, Taylor&Francis Online, Science Direct, Web of Science, Academic Search Complete and ERIC indexes.

#### **Data Collection and Analysis**

An epistemological document analysis method was used in the research [8]. The full texts of the theses and the articles have been transferred to the computer environment in pdf format by applying the above mentioned criteria. The theses and articles have been examined in detail, and in the distribution of the theses and articles investigated, the frequency and percent distribution from the descriptive analysis methods have been utilized [2].

#### **Results**

In Table 1 one can see the distribution of the studies covering the emotion regulation skills in pre-school period in Turkey according to years. According to the research results, there are 14 scientific researches related to the subject in the period of 20 years. 10 of these 14 (71.43%) are graduate thesis, 1 (7.14%) is doctoral thesis, and 3 (21.43%) are scientific papers. The distribution ratios have shown that 2010 and 2016 are considered to be the years in which the greatest number of the related Master's theses was performed. One study was conducted in each of the years of 2006, 2013, 2014 and 2015, and no studies were found in other years. In the year 2015, only 1 doctoral dissertation was prepared, and no studies were found in other years. Three articles have been found (2 papers written in 2015, and 1 in 2016).

According to the Table 2, the research of Aktürk (2016), among the Master's theses regarding emotion regulation in pre-school period between 1996 and 2016, was carried out by experimental research method. All other Master's theses were performed by the scanning model. The review of the research samples in the examined Master's theses has shown that the studies involved pre-school students, their mothers and teachers. The examination of the survey instruments used in the studies has shown that at least two and maximum four scales were used in each research.

According to the Table 3, it can be seen that only one doctoral dissertation, which is focused on emotion regulation skills in pre-school period, was prepared within 20 years (from 1996 to 2016). In the sample of Sahin's (2015) screening model research study, which investigated whether executive functions and emotion regulation skills differed according to the attachment patterns of 6-year-old children, 137 children at the age of 6 were included. Three scales were used in it.

Table 1.

*Yearly Distribution of the Studies Carried Out on Emotion Regulation Skills in Pre-School Period in Turkey*

Year	Master's Thesis		Doctoral Thesis		Article	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1996	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
1997	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
1998	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
1999	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
2000	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
2001	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
2002	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
2003	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
2004	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
2005	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
2006	1	10	-	0.0	-	0.0
2007	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
2008	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
2009	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
2010	3	30	-	0.0	-	0.0
2011	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
2012	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
2013	1	10	-	0.0	-	0.0
2014	1	10	-	0.0	-	0.0
2015	1	10	1	100.0	2	66.66
2016	3	30	-	0.0	1	33.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2.

*Master's Theses Related to the Skills of Emotion Regulation in Pre-school Period in Turkey*

Researcher / Year / Province	Name of the Thesis	Method / Sample	Measuring Tools
Altan, Ö. 2006 Istanbul	Maternal socialization and the effect of the child's temperament on the child's emotion regulation skills	Scanning Model 145 children at the ages between 4 and 6, their mothers and teachers	Emotion regulation Skills Scale Pleasure Postponing Skill Test Coping with Negative Feelings Scale Child Breeding Inventory
Kurbet, H. 2010 Ankara	Examining the emotion regulation skills of the pre-school children and their mothers' empathic tendencies and attitudes	Scanning Model A total of 277 children aged from 5 to 6, consisted of 133 girls and 144 boys, and their mothers	Children's Feelings Rating Scale Empathic Tendency Scale Family Attitude and Behaviour Scale Family Information Form
Metin, İ. 2010 Istanbul	Anger / anger tendency, self-control skills, and the effect of mother's sensitivity to the emotion regulation skills of Turkish pre-school children	Scanning Model 118 children aged 3-6 years, mothers and kindergarten teachers	Emotion regulation Skills Scale Self-Control Ability Scale Maternal Child's Sensitivity Scale
Sen, H. 2010 Istanbul	Could the speed of recovery be indicative of emotion regulation?	Scanning Model 67 children between 3,6-7,0 years and mother	Behavioural Batteries Emotion Regulation Scale MacArthur Health and Behaviour Survey
Mustafaoğlu, N. 2013 Istanbul	The role of mother's strategies in the child's emotion regulation in case of postponing the pleasure	Scanning Model 62 children between 19-34 months and their mothers	General information form Mother's Emotion Regulation Strategies Scale

Researcher / Year / Province	Name of the Thesis	Method / Sample	Measuring Tools
Ertan, N. N. 2014 Istanbul	Investigation of the relationship between “emotion regulation” and “coping strategies” of pre-school children through “self-monitoring through effort”	Scanning Model A total of 45 children consisted of 25 girls and 20 boys, aged between 4 and 6 years.	Emotion Regulation Scale Pre-school Age Coping Scale for Children Self-monitoring Through Effort Battery
Kayhan Aktürk, Ş. 2015, Istanbul	Examination of emotion regulation skills and peer relations in pre-school children	Scanning Model 880 pre-school children and their teachers	Personal Information Form, Emotional Adjustment Scale Ladd-Profilet Child Behaviour Scale
Akturk, B. 2016 Osmaniye	The effect of game-based psychoeducation program on the level of emotion regulation skills of pre-school children with divorced parents	Experimental Model 24 kindergarten students consisted of 12 girls and 12 boys	Children's Emotional Rating Scale Personal Information Form
Erel, S. 2016 Ankara	Ability to take perspective on pre-school children, relationship of emotion regulation and moral development with behavioural problems	Scanning Model 123 children aged from 4 to 6 years and parents of these children	Denham Emotion Understanding Task Test The Moral Dilemma Test Emotion Regulation Scale Hacettepe Spiritual Consistence Scale
Işık Uslu, A.E. 2016 Ankara	Evaluation of the mothers' beliefs about children's emotions and the relationship between the child's emotion regulation skills, and the mothers' emotional talks to the children	Scanning Model 50 children aged from 4 to 6 years, who receive pre-school education, and their mothers	General Information Form Parents' Beliefs about Children's Feelings Scale Children's Feelings Rating Scale

Table 3.

***Ph.D. Master's Theses Related to the Skills of Emotion Regulation in Pre-School Period in Turkey***

Researcher / Year / Province	Name of the Thesis	Method / Sample	Measuring Tools
Sahin, G. 2015 Eskisehir	Examination of executive functions of pre-school children and emotion regulation skills in terms of attachment patterns	Scanning Model A total of 137 students, consisting of 70 girls and 67 boys, in the age group of 6	Incomplete Toy Baby Stories Task of Flexibility in Object Selection Pre-School Self-Regulation Scale

Table 4.

***Articles Related to the issue of Emotion Regulation Skills in Pre-school Period in Turkey***

Researcher / Year / Province	Name of the Article	Method / Sample	Measuring Tools
Koçyiğit, Yılmaz and Sezer, 2015 Erzurum	Investigation of the relationship between social competence and emotion regulation skills and playing skills of 60-72 month old children	Scanning Model 228 children of 60-72 months.	Social Competence and Behavioral Assessment Scale Emotion Regulation Scale Game Skills Assessment Scale
Ecirli and Ogelman, 2015 Denizli	The validity-reliability study of the emotion regulation strategies scale for children aged 5 to 6 years	Scanning Model 70 children of 5-6 years.	Scale of Emotion Regulation Strategies
Arı and Yaban, 2016 Ankara	Social behaviors of children in the pre-school period: the role of temperament and emotion regulation	Scanning Model 250 children of 4-5-6 years, their mothers and teachers	Short Temperament Scale for Children Child Emotional Rating Scale Pre-school Social Behavior Scale

According to the Table 4, three articles regarding emotion regulation skills in pre-school period were written over the period between 1996 and 2016. All three of these research studies were performed by screening model. It is seen that the selected samples in the articles involved pre-school students, their mothers and teachers. At least one-maximum three scales were used in the studies.

### Conclusions

The Master's theses, doctoral dissertations and articles in the field of emotion regulation skills in the pre-school period written/prepared in Turkey from 1996 to 2016, covering 20 years, constitute the scope of this study. When the studies related to the subject were examined, we have found that 10 Master's theses, 1 doctoral dissertation and 3 articles were written within the period of 20 years from 1996 until today.

The examination of the research studies in terms of the research models has shown that all but one were carried out by the scanning method. The only study was performed by the experimental one. No qualitative or longitudinal studies on emotion regulation skills have been identified. It is thought that a comprehensive evaluation of the development of the emotion regulation skills of children particularly with the longitudinal research methodology will be very useful for parents, teachers and researchers. The examination of the scientific works in the field has demonstrated the small number of research studies were performed by Turkish scholars. For this reason, it may be suggested to carry out researches in the different topics that have not been studied before, involving the emotional regulation skills in the pre-school period (prosocial behaviours and emotion regulation skills, moral development and emotion regulation skills, children with special needs and their emotion regulation skills, gifted children and their emotion regulation skills, peer violence exposure and emotion regulation skills, etc.).

It is interesting that most of the analysed research studies were performed in big cities of the western part of Turkey. It is considered that the studies involving emotion

regulation skills in small and large settlements in different regions of our country will also have positive results in terms of the field development. Besides, the designing of educational programs considering the geographical, socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the regions are of great importance in terms of emotional development of pre-school children as well as the development of their positive feelings towards themselves, other people and the whole world.

From the moment the child arrives to the world, he/she develops rapidly in physical, mental, social and emotional aspects as a result of the interaction with the environment. The period from 0 to 6 years is one of the critical ones in human life, in which the foundations of the personality are laid and the child is highly affected by the immediate circle and is open to all kinds of learning [12]. For this reason, the issue of the emotion regulation skills, which is a particular concern to both an individual and the society, can be taught to the pre-school teachers in in-service training programs that are to be organized. The students who study at Pre-school Teachers and Child Development and Education Departments at Universities can be taught to prepare programs that will contribute to the development of the emotion regulation skills in children.

Family has one of the most important effects on all areas of child's development (including the emotional development). For this reason, studies on emotional development and emotion regulation skills in pre-school period may include topics such as parent education, family participation, and school-family cooperation. Intercultural studies in which the emotion regulation skills of children in different countries are compared to emotion regulation skills of children in our country might be performed. In pre-school period, validity-reliability studies can be carried out by developing different measurement tools to measure emotion regulation skills of children. Due to all these mentioned reasons, numerous additional researches are needed on the subject of emotion regulation skills in pre-school period.

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#### ПРОБЛЕМА ЕМОЦІЙНОЇ РЕГУЛЯЦІЇ ДОШКІЛЬНИКІВ У НАУКОВИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯХ ТУРЕЧЧИНИ

У статті здійснено аналіз наукових робіт за період з 1996 до 2016 рр. з проблем емоційної регуляції дошкільників. Загалом було знайдено та проаналізовано 10 магістерських, 1 докторську (кандидатську) дисертації та 3 наукові статті. Усі знайдені роботи було класифіковано за роком та місцем проведення, типом та методами дослідження. Дисертації з теми емоційної регуляції було отримано з Дисертаційного центру Департаменту вищої освіти, а статті було знайдено за допомогою сканування Google Scholar, Ulakbim-Journal Park, Taylor&Francis Online, Science Direct, Web of Science, Academic Search Complete and ERIC. За результатами проведеного дослідження можна зробити висновок, що у Туреччині проблема емоційної регуляції дошкільників вивчена на недостатньому рівні та потребує пильної уваги до себе з боку дослідників. Пропонується включити цю тему в якості предмету дослідження до магістерських та докторських (кандидатських) дисертацій. Окрім цього, слід проводити дослідження шляхом розробки інструментів для визначення емоційної регуляції дітей, а також порівняльні дослідження особливостей розвитку навичок емоційної регуляції дітей Туреччини та інших країн. Особливості емоційної регуляції дітей мають розглядатися в рамках спеціально організованих курсів для діючих учителів початкових класів. Студентів, які навчаються на факультетах дошкільного виховання, варто навчати розробляти програми для розвитку у дітей навичок емоційної регуляції. Відомо, що родина має найбільший вплив на розвиток дитини, отже пропонується в рамках вивчення проблем емоційної регуляції також розглядати такі теми, як родинне виховання, взаємодія учителів і батьків тощо.

**Ключові слова:** дошкільний період, емоційна регуляція, магістерська дисертація, докторська дисертація, наукові дослідження, Туреччина.

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