

The Primary Reading/Writing Education Process in Light of the Views of Mothers, Who Learn Reading/Writing in Turkish, and Their Children

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ABSTRACT: The primary reading and writing education process is one of the most crucial experiences that shape individuals' future lives and influence their achievements throughout life. With the help of acquired reading and writing skills, individuals learn their societal values and ensure that the society, in which they live, will look toward the future more confidently. Today when information is intensively produced and consumed, whether a person's existence is acknowledged and whether a person continues to succeed are directly connected to whether a good quality reading and writing education was received by the person in the past. The goal of this research is to evaluate and analyze the views of mothers, who participated in the primary education course on reading and writing in Turkish at the Turkish Cypriot Child Protection Institution in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus approximately for five months in the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, as well as the views of their children, who closely followed up the process. With this goal, a study was carried out with 15 mothers, who participated in the above course, and 15 children, who stood by their mothers during this process. Mothers and children participating in the study were asked to narrate the memories of their experiences during the primary education course on reading and writing in Turkish. The research data were collected via face-to-face interviews and written documents. The thematic analysis method was used in the analysis of research data, and themes produced from written documents were categorized into sub-themes and were evaluated.

Keywords: Primary reading and writing education, child protection institution, Narration, mother education, girls' education.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the basic skills that make an individual's life easier throughout the entire lifespan is reading and writing. With the help of reading and writing skills that form the basis of education, individuals communicate with other human beings and societies existing all over the world, and also, they gain the habit of constantly acquiring new information, which is a requirement of today. Besides, again with the help of reading and writing skills, individuals transfer their cultures to future generations and accordingly fulfill a highly crucial task in ensuring that the nations, of which they are members, will look toward the future with confidence.

Education begins with the birth of an individual, develops under the influence of the environment, and continues at schools. Today, one of the most basic skills that children start to get in the preschool period and obtain at elementary school is reading and writing. Children who acquire these skills healthfully have quite successful social and educational lives in the future. Therefore, receiving a lasting reading and writing education during the preschool period and, particularly, in primary school years is of vital importance to the child. With a similar approach, Demirel and Yağmur also asserted that having an effective reading and writing education at an early age enabled preschool children to have strong literacy skills in later periods of life [1]. Additionally, according to Erbasan and Erbasan, reading and writing constitute the basis of education, and Erbasan and Erbasan evaluate reading and writing as the first and probably the most significant step of the education process that will go on for long years. Hence, an effective primary reading

and writing education given at an early age becomes also the determinant of success in education life that will continue later on [2].

Teacher is known to be the most significant factor for the fulfillment of a successful reading and writing process even if there are a variety of factors that are determinants of an effective reading and writing education (making a good course plan, teaching the course by using different instruction methods, using an effective measurement and evaluation method, and so on). The statement uttered frequently today, "The best chance in life is to run across a good teacher.", also confirms this view. Likewise, in the study by Tabak and Sağrılı, it was emphasized that, even if there were different factors affecting the success of primary reading and writing education, the instructor occupied a highly significant role in this sense [3,4]. Besides, in a master's thesis prepared in 2021, Büşra Türkücü Tabak put forward that teacher was one of the most significant factors for equipping students with reading and writing skills and also referred to the qualities of a teacher competent in language teaching by stating, "A successful teacher knows that the teaching and learning of a language depend more on skill than knowledge, also, the successful teacher plans teaching efforts thoroughly, uses audiovisual media particularly, ensures the participation of students in the lesson, perceives individual differences between students, takes these differences into consideration, and motivates the student." [5,6].

Even if the teacher is accepted as one of the most significant factors in the reading and writing education process in the 21st century, the technological equipment of the school and the economic conditions of families are also considered as determining factors of a good quality reading and writing education process. Also, in a master's thesis prepared in 2021, Esra Gür Tekin, quoting from the study by Liu, Georgiou, and Manolitsis, asserted, "The language development of children in the early childhood period and particularly these children's reading and writing skills in the forthcoming years were negatively affected in families with a low socioeconomic status." [7].

In the review of the relevant literature, we found a large number of studies conducted thus far on primary reading and writing education, however, there was no study performed specifically on mothers, who received primary reading and writing education at an advanced age, and their children, who closely followed up this process. Particularly, it was observed that there was a limited number of narrative research studies conducted in a general sense on primary reading and writing education.

On the basis of written documents, this research aims to analyze the views of mothers, who learned reading and writing in Turkish at the Turkish Cypriot Child Protection Institution in the 2022-2023 academic year, and their children, who closely followed up the process, on the primary reading and writing education. It is considered that written documents received from mothers and their children on the primary reading and writing education process will contribute to the development of the field by identifying what mothers and their children feel particularly in the reading and writing education process, what sort of problems they experience during this process, and which solutions will eliminate these problems.

II. MATERIAL AND METHOD

1. RESEARCH DESIGN

Narrative research aims to analyze individuals' experiences on any topic through stories written by these individuals. By narrating the relevant individuals' experiences in written format, researchers take individuals' experiences and their narratives on these experiences as the topic of the analysis.

Narrative research is built on stories and is nurtured by different disciplines such as literature, history, anthropology, sociology, and education [8]. Also, Gürbüz and Şahin define narrative research as narrating, via stories, the meanings attributed by human beings to a specific topic or phenomenon, and they further emphasize that stories can be used as a method in research as they are symbolically and emotionally strong narratives [9].

This study was founded on narrative research since challenges and emotions experienced by mothers, who attended the primary education course on reading and writing in Turkish at a relatively advanced age (35 years or above) in the Turkish Cypriot Child Protection Institution, and their children, who closely

followed up the process, would be best addressed via the narrative research, which is a qualitative research design.

2. STUDY GROUP

The study group comprised 15 mothers, who learned reading and writing in Turkish for the first time at the Turkish Cypriot Child Protection Institution in the 2022-2023 academic year, and 15 children, who stood by their mothers during this process. In this regard, this research included children together with mothers, and by collecting memories from a large study group, it aspired to add diversity to participant views on the primary reading and writing education process. Mothers participating in the study were coded as W1, W2, and so on, and their children were coded as C1, C2, and so on.

Table 1. Data on demographic characteristics of mothers and children in the study group

Participant Mothers	Age	Place of Birth	Participant Children	Age
W1	42	Mardin, Turkey	C1	12
W2	32	Mardin, Turkey	C2	11
W3	41	Mardin, Turkey	C3	23
W4	50	Mardin, Turkey	C4	17
W5	36	Mardin, Turkey	C5	13
W6	51	Hatay, Turkey	C6	16
W7	49	Hatay, Turkey	C7	17
W8	42	Mardin, Turkey	C8	10
W9	38	Mardin, Turkey	C9	11
W10	47	Syria	C10	9
W11	31	Mardin, Turkey	C11	8
W12	54	Hatay, Turkey	C12	18
W13	65	Hatay, Turkey	C13	27
W14	33	Hatay, Turkey	C14	11
W15	45	Saudi Arabia	C15	15

As viewed in Table 1, participant mothers taking the primary education course on reading and writing in Turkish and representing different age groups try to continue their lives in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus after coming to this country from different locations. These participants could not go to school in the past for different reasons, and as a consequence, they failed to learn reading and writing in Turkish.

3. DATA COLLECTION

The goal of the research was explained to mothers, who took the primary education course on reading and writing in Turkish, and their children, next, mothers and their children were asked questions designed to find out their demographic characteristics, and lastly, they were requested to narrate their 5-month experiences. In this process, utmost attention was paid to what participants narrated, rather than how they did it, and the research data were collected via interviews and written documents (compositions). Two

narratives not fully meeting the criteria to be considered as a composition were left out of the research, and hence, a total of 30 compositions were obtained from participants (15 compositions from mothers and 15 compositions from their children).

4. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The study was performed with volunteering mothers and their children upon the receipt of permission for research from the Turkish Cypriot Child Protection Institution. The goal of the research was clearly explained to both mothers and their children, and they were told that the research data would be used solely for research purposes and that the confidentiality of their demographic data, in particular, would be protected. In the data analysis, the opinions of a researcher, who was an expert in the field, were received, and the study was examined in terms of themes, the research question, and the consistency of data. Researchers reached a consensus especially while creating themes and sub-themes.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The thematic analysis method was used in the study. As is known, in the thematic analysis, there are six stages, that is, (1) familiarizing the researcher with data, (2) creating the initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) preparing the report. In this respect, first of all, all written compositions were read once again. Next, the collected data were coded, and upon creating a code list, deliberations were launched to identify the likely themes and sub-themes. In the fourth stage, themes and sub-themes were reviewed once again, and then they were simplified. In the fifth stage, frequency distributions were calculated upon creating themes clearly, and lastly, in the reporting stage, certain remarks quoted from participants were presented and interpreted under each theme.

III. FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of narratives of mothers and their children about the primary reading and writing education process, a total of five themes, namely, challenges of not knowing how to read and write in Turkish (f=13), teaching methods (f=11), family (f=3), dreams (f=6), and qualities of the teacher (f=8), were created. These five themes were categorized into sub-themes.

Table 2. Sub-themes under the theme of challenges of not knowing how to read and write in Turkish

Theme	Sub-themes
Challenges of not knowing how to read and write in Turkish	Failing to get a driver's license (f=13)
	Failing to be an individual (f=2)
	Being ashamed of other people (f=7)
	Failing to watch TV (f=14)
	Failing to go to the hospital (f=16)
	Failing to go to the grocery store (f=18)
	Being deceived (f=3)
	Failing to help children (f=11)
	Failing to speak to people (f=10)
	Failing to read books (f=21)
	Failing to use telephones (f=14)

Failing to get on a bus (f=4)
Lack of self-confidence (f=3)

There are 13 sub-themes under the theme of challenges of not knowing how to read and write in Turkish. Under the sub-theme of failing to get a driver’s license, certain mothers stated that they could not get out of their homes due to not knowing how to read and write in Turkish, and in a similar vein, certain mothers’ children asserted that their mothers had difficulty in traveling around alone. Besides, certain mothers said that not knowing how to read and write was one of the largest barriers to being an individual, and as a consequence, they felt very ashamed in society. Mothers stating that they were highly challenged in meeting basic life needs, such as watching TV, going to the hospital, going to the grocery store, getting on a bus, and using a telephone, put forward that they always felt the pain of not knowing how to read and write. Under this theme, in general, mothers said that they failed to help their children, read books, and speak to other people, and were deceived in the grocery store as they did not know how to read and write in Turkish while their children alleged that their mothers lacked self-confidence due to not knowing how to read and write, and also children stressed the importance of reading books.

Certain remarks quoted from participants about this theme were presented below:

“...I cannot get out of home as I do not know how to read and write. My first assignment will be to get a driver’s license as soon as I learn (reading and writing in Turkish).”, “... I desire to travel around comfortably with my children after getting a driver’s license.”, “...My mother thinks that she constantly becomes a burden on me as she cannot wander around alone.” (W1, W4, C4).

“...After learning to read and write, I wander around more comfortably in society, I no longer get ashamed.” (W8), “...Previously, I would not think I was a full individual, henceforth, I feel myself an individual.” (W3), “...My mother, henceforth, looks at life more positively. She gained self-confidence, and this, in turn, made us very happy.” (C5), “...Henceforth, I both read books and can help my children.” (W4), “...I can express myself more comfortably.” (W3, W8), “...Henceforth, I am reading books, though, slowly, and as a consequence, I am very happy.” (W7), “...Every evening, my mother definitely spares some time to read a few things, and this makes her happy.” (C7).

Table 3. Sub-themes under the theme of teaching methods

Theme	Sub-themes
Teaching methods	Educational games (f=2)
	The use of technology (f=8)
	Giving homework assignments (f=22)
	Constantly asking questions (f=8)
	Using the whiteboard effectively (f=5)
	Using different materials (f=7)
	Constantly repeating (f=13)
	Motivating (f=12)
	Using the letter technique (f=6)
	Reading books (f=18)
	Establishing a relationship with life (f=6)

There are 11 sub-themes under the theme of teaching methods. It was discerned that mothers who could not go to school in the past for different reasons were aware of certain methods helping them learn reading and writing in Turkish even if they did not name these methods as -teaching methods-. All mothers and a number of children emphasized that homework assignments given to mothers frequently were highly effective in enabling mothers to learn reading and writing in Turkish even if mothers were challenged by these assignments. Besides, they said that repeating the lessons constantly, asking questions, reading books in the lesson, and using course-related materials both made the course more entertaining and facilitated learning. Additionally, a number of mothers stated that course teachers started by introducing the letters and this facilitated learning reading and writing whilst some mothers emphasized that using the whiteboard effectively and utilizing technology and educational games made learning an entertaining endeavor for them.

Moreover, mothers said that, when their motivation fell, teachers motivated them, and also, when teachers gave examples from real life, mothers found it quite productive.

Certain remarks quoted from participants about this theme were presented below:

"...Our teachers frequently gave us homework assignments, and these assignments that we performed at home made our job very easy even if we were hard put to do them." (W1, W11, W15), "...My mother was doing her homework with us and constantly reviewing (it)." (C11), "...Our teachers firstly introduced the letters and this helped us learn more easily." (W7, W13), "...As teachers used technological devices in the lesson and brought different materials to the classroom, the course proceeded better." (W15, W1), "...Our teachers offered educational games and performed different activities, and this, in turn, made the lesson more entertaining." (W14), "...Our teachers had very high levels of motivation, and they helped and motivated us when we fell and were troubled." (W7, W8).

Table 4. Sub-themes under the theme of family

Theme	Sub-themes
Family	Helping the mother with homework assignments (f=19)
	Motivating the mother (f=15)
	Not allowing the mother to go to school (f=12)

There are 3 sub-themes under the theme of family. One of the most significant sub-themes pertained to the fact that family members helped mothers particularly in homework assignments whilst another significant sub-theme was about the fact that mothers motivated themselves constantly. A larger number of mothers participating in the study were constantly motivated by their children and spouses, and also, when necessary, their children and spouses helped them with their homework assignments. The last sub-theme under the theme of family is an expression of a significantly negative situation that mothers experienced in the past during their childhood. Unfortunately, a large number of mothers could not go to school and learn reading and writing due to the thinking of their fathers, "A female child does not need to go to school."

Certain remarks quoted from participants about this theme were presented below:

"...My mother would constantly read some things and I would help her." (C4, C5, C7), "...My mother and I constantly repeated (her lessons) and I observed that she became very happy as she learned more and more." (C6), "...Both my children and my spouse constantly motivated me." (W8), "...My father did not let me go to school. According to him, it was shameful for female children to go to school." (W12, W14).

Table 5. Sub-themes under the theme of dreams

Theme	Sub-themes
Dreams	Learning English (f=1)
	Being a writer (f=3)

Traveling (f=16)
Helping the child at school (f=14)
Being able to go to the bank (f=2)
Using telephone/computer (f=2)

There are 6 sub-themes under the theme of dreams. Mothers learning reading and writing in Turkish at a relatively advanced age had beautiful dreams about the future as well as dreams even to be considered interesting. All mothers participating in the study were highly eager to read and write in Turkish and stated that they wanted to learn reading and writing in Turkish to be able to go to the bank with no fear or worry, use computers, and help their children, especially, with homework assignments. Certain mothers dreamed of traveling with their children upon obtaining a driver’s license while some mothers had even greater dreams such as being a writer and learning English.

Certain remarks quoted from participants about this theme were presented below:

“...I learned reading and writing in Turkish, I will no longer have fear while awaiting in the queue at a bank, I will sign the right place.” (W12), “...I am very happy as I will be able to help my children. I could not help my daughters, however, at least, I will help my sons.” (W1), “...Upon obtaining a driver’s license, I want to travel with my children.” (W10), “...I have been here for four years and I could not see most of the places, henceforth, I want to get a driver’s license and travel around.” (W2), “...I see all children as my children. I want all of them to be educated. Therefore, I will write and publish a book for them.” (W13), “...My mother, henceforth, can go to the grocery store and wander around alone, we do not have to go together with her.” (C9), “...Lastly, I want to learn English. English became widespread all over the world. As a large number of tourists come to our country, I want to answer and help them in its simplest form when they ask for directions.” (W4), “...I want to use telephone and computer.” (W5), “...Henceforth, my mother is using telephone comfortably.” (C5).

Table 6. Sub-themes under the theme of qualities of the teacher

Theme	Sub-themes
Qualities of the teacher	Patient (f=12)
	Genial (f=16)
	Fair (f=2)
	Caring (f=18)
	Energetic (f=6)
	Tolerant (f=12)
	Knowledgeable (f=7)
	Understanding (f=11)

There are 8 sub-themes under the theme of qualities of teacher. Mothers and children participating in the study stated that positive developments in the course on reading and writing in Turkish were connected to the qualities of teachers lecturing the course. Mothers said that the teachers lecturing the course were genial, caring, tolerant, patient, understanding, knowledgeable, energetic, and fair, and they also mentioned that these qualities of their teachers made them highly happy and made the education process entertaining and

productive for them. Also, certain children participating in the study stated that teachers were genial and caring.

Certain remarks quoted from participants about this theme were presented below:

"...I used to be embarrassed and shy to go to the course, on the other hand, over time, I understood that it was unnecessary to be embarrassed because our teachers were highly genial and patient." (W5), "...Teachers are very caring, they treat everyone equally, and they always approach us with a smiley face." (W4), "...My mother was saying that teachers were genial and caring, hence, her writing improved a lot." (C2), "...Our teachers reached everyone, they were very caring." (W13), "...We had very energetic teachers, and this increased our motivation, too." (W7), "...Our teachers were so good that they even cared for my baby that I occasionally had to bring to the course." (W11).

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the research, how mothers, who learned reading and writing in Turkish, and their children, who were closest to mothers during the learning process, evaluated this process was examined via narratives (compositions). Upon analyzing participants' narratives, five themes, namely, challenges of not knowing how to read and write in Turkish, teaching methods, family, dreams, and qualities of the teacher, were created.

In the context of evaluating mothers' narratives, it was found that, for several reasons, mothers could not go to school and learn reading and writing in Turkish even if they did not choose to do so. The basic reason for not going to school was unfortunately the negative thinking of their own families (mothers and especially their fathers) that it was wrong to let female children go to school. Also, there were a number of participants who could not go to school because, for instance, the participant could not complete the school registration process as her father, who was her legal guardian, lost his identity card or there were certain participants who had to leave school due to an ugly incident experienced at the school (for example, a participant's friend was badly beaten by the teacher). In the study titled "Female Children's Reasons for Not Going to School: The Case of Van Province in Turkey" by Aynur İlhan Tunç, some of the participants alleged that women did not need to go to school, they would definitely get married one day in the future, and their husbands would earn a livelihood for them [10]. Likewise, in the research conducted in 2015 by Defne Erzene Bürgin, it was emphasized that a large number of women were left out of an education life along with the negative thinking, "A female child does not receive any education." [11].

In the current period, that is, in the 21st century, not knowing how to read and write affects a human being's life negatively. In narratives, mothers and their children talked, particularly, about the challenges of not knowing how to read and write, and they emphasized that sustaining life in this way was almost impossible. Negative circumstances, such as feeling ashamed of people around them, being deceived by cashiers in the grocery store, and being unable to wander around due to experiencing the fear of getting lost, came to the fore as mothers' basic reasons for learning reading and writing even if mothers were at a relatively advanced age. With a similar approach, in the master's thesis prepared in 2007 by Songül Damarlı Oçak and titled "The Relationship between Language Development Levels and Reading & Writing Achievements of the Primary School First-Grade Students", it was stated that reading and writing were among human beings' basic learning needs, and it was underlined that human beings definitely needed to learn reading and writing to sustain their existence and live and work honorably [12]. Almost all children participating in the study said that, as their mothers did not know how to read and write in Turkish, their lives were also affected, and also, they talked about the troubles experienced by them due to this situation. A significant number of children stating that their mothers' living conditions got heavier as a consequence of this situation also expressed their satisfaction with the course lectured at the Turkish Cypriot Child Protection Institution. Moreover, participant mothers' certain dreams that are deemed to be interesting are also among the results that attract attention in this study. For instance, a large majority of mothers participating in the course stated that their first endeavors would be to get a driver's license and travel around after learning reading and writing whilst some mothers asserted that they would spend the rest of their lives by reading several books. One of the mothers said that she would like to become a writer in the future and added that she would publish a lot of books for all children to read in the future.

One of the factors that ensured that mothers continued to attend the course and became successful was the approach of teachers toward mothers. Both mothers and their children put forward that teacher lecturing

during the course were tolerant, patient, caring, genial, and energetic, and they additionally said that these qualities of teachers motivated them considerably. In parallel to the results of this research, a study published by Tuncay Türkben in 2019 stated that the teacher played a highly key role in enabling the child to develop a love of reading [13].

Teaching methods used by teachers during the process are also extremely effective in enabling mothers to easily gain the habit of reading and writing. Almost all mothers participating in this research referred in their narratives to the teaching methods used by teachers who lectured in the course, and they stated that teaching methods helped them learn reading and writing in Turkish. During the process, using technology, lecturing the lesson by connecting it to real life, paying utmost attention, particularly, to students lagging behind others and giving additional homework assignments to such students, constantly repeating lessons, and supporting the course from time to time with educational games became effective in ensuring that mothers learned reading and writing in such a short period as five months. Children participating in the study also said that mothers learned reading and writing faster with the help of homework assignments given to them frequently. Also, in the master's thesis prepared in 2019 by Ayşegül Polat, it was stated that methods and techniques to be utilized to help the student acquire the desired skills during the reading and writing education were highly crucial and educational games were, in this sense, very effective [14].

The family occupies a highly key place in an individual's life. In the current study, it was observed that the most ardent supporters of mothers who learned reading and writing at a relatively advanced age were their children and spouses. One of the first actions taken by mothers after learning reading and writing was to read their children's homework assignments and be beside their children while their children were doing homework. On the other hand, in general, children provided their mothers with assistance constantly while their mothers were doing homework and helped their mothers go through the reading and writing learning process more successfully.

Upon the review of results obtained from memories of mothers and their children, it is discerned that both mothers and their children were aware of the challenges of not knowing how to read and write in Turkish and these challenges affected all family members. In this paper, it can also be stated that mothers who were in the school environment for the first time and were trying to learn reading and writing in Turkish had information about certain teaching methods even if they could not name these methods and the amount of this information was little, and also, mothers were familiar with certain qualities of good teachers.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Departing from the narratives of 15 mothers and their 15 children, this study evaluated the primary reading and writing education process aimed at mothers at the Turkish Cypriot Child Protection Institution approximately for 5 months in the 2022-2023 academic year. In prospective studies, it is considered that more interesting results can be obtained if the number of participants is increased. Also, studies that will examine solely the elementary school students' memories of the reading and writing education process can be conducted.

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